A NARRAGANSETT PEER

GEORGE APPLETON

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A Narragansett Peer

A Historic Romance of Southern New England

BY

GEORGE APPLETON

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A NARRAGANSETT PEER.

CHAPTER I.

THE VISIT TO SIS' ANN.

"Arch'lus!"

The voice rang out loud and clear like a bugle call on a frosty morning. A motherly hen, descendant of that phlegmatic and lazily loquacious race from Cochin China, that had stolen her nest behind the pasture wall under the Crow's Egg apple tree, and appeared with an unwelcome and eager brood of fourteen to enjoy the summer of life in no clothing worth the mention, just as the summer of the year was moving out to make way for autumn, was scratching in the hollyhock bed under the window, and when the ringing tones ranged back and forth, she paused in her work of producing grubs for the fourteen untimely born, cackled in a chuckling way and exclaimed, "ker-klack!" which translated into the speech of man means, "Louder!"

"Arch'—lus!"

The tone was a little more voluminous with a sharper edge and more power of penetration. The drowsy leaves of the nubbin pear tree quivered perceptibly as the atmospheric atoms jostled each other roughly, but the only response to the urgent call was the sudden and uncalled for appearance of Stump. He came around the corner of the barn with a jerk and a questioning bark, and, tak-

ing an easy position on his haunches, cocked his ears and awaited the issue with great interest.

"I never see sech er man! Ef I want 'im, he's off er dewin' suthin' outer sight an' hearin'! Ef I don't want 'im, he's right roun' under foot an' in ther way! Jest like er man! Et does try me so when I got so much ter dew ter git ready!"

"Arch'—lus!"

The swaying branches of the nubbin pear tree felt the impulse and the weathercock on the barn, prancing all the morning trying to please contrary winds, put his helm hard down and came up gallantly into the stiff breeze that proceeded from the kitchen window and awaited orders, according to the rule of behavior of everything on the farm when the ruling spirit was abroad and its word of command or enquiry had an impatient twist and an earnest intonation.

Stump barked impatiently as though impending events moved too slowly, for he saw no sign of an invitation to a second breakfast. The motherly hen under the window, still trying to find employment for fourteen gizzards besides her own, lifted her wings and sighed, "Troo-loo!" which stands for "O, dear!"

A faint voice was heard in the distance—from some deep recess of the farm buildings and came limping up within range.

"Whar be ye? Ye kin be ther slowest mortal an' not more'n half try!"

"Here I be!" and the tall form of Archelaus appeared in a side door. "What ye dewin' so much hollerin' fer?"

"Ye're long 'nough er comin'! Whar ye ben hidin'? What ye ben erbout?"

"I was deown in ther"—

"Wal, ye kin put Sandy inter ther waggin' an' dress

yerself up, an' soon's I git my dishes done up, we'll go an' make thet visit ter Sis' Ann we've ben er talkin' erbout so long, an' hurry right roun', an' don't be er mopin' an' er keepin' me er waitin' fer ye! Jest try ter be spry fer once!"

Archelaus received this information and the order that accompanied it with calm resignation and reentered the barn to prepare Sandy for the journey. Assured that Plym was not in the barn, he ascended to the scaffold with cautious eye and foot. Plym, however, digging potatoes above the barn and awake to any stirring movement, and looking, not always in vain, for excuse to forego labor, heard the explosive demand for his uncle, ran to a connecting shed, and, under cover, threw up his hat at the prospect—a day to himself with no nagging and no depressing cares.

Noting through a crack in the door his uncle's expression of countenance, which he could read as well as large print, and knowing on what occasions and under what provocation an explosion might be expected, ran out of the shed by a back way, climbed the ladder to a high beam in the barn like a squirrel, lay flat upon it and awaited his uncle's coming to see what had given him much diversion many times before.

Going to a corner of the hayloft, Archelaus took from a brace a long hickory rod and turned and balanced it in his hand. In the corner, also, was a bale of hay. This he drew out and hung upon a nail in a rafter. It was a corpulent, well rounded bale of hay with a cord around it a third of the distance from the top. After carefully weighing the rod in his hand and testing its elasticity, shaking his head threateningly and exclaiming under his breath, "Heow be ye this mornin', Sis' Ann? Hum! Ye will, will ye! Per'aps I'll hev suthin' ter say 'bout et!

Sho! We'll see!" He applied the rod to the bale with exceeding vigor and animation and continued to thus ease his mind till lost in a cloud of dust whipped out of the bag and its contents.

At last, coughing and sneezing, but with countenance aglow and satisfied, Archelaus descended, harnessed Sandy and then went to the house to prepare himself for the intended visit, to shave, a long and painful process, and to squeeze himself into his blue broadcloth suit two sizes too small for him.

Plym, softly chuckling, left his perch in the barn and hurried away to the potato field, where he was expected to exert himself. Archelaus was ready by nine o'clock, held fast in his warm broadcloth, the suit in which he had been married, scant in the sleeves and with an uncomfortable tightness everywhere—a veritable strait jacket on a warm day.

"Arch'lus, it's nine er clock! Ef ye're dressed an' ready, bring up Sandy ter once! I'm er most through! Don't ye keep me er waitin' fer ye!"

"She won't be ready fer nigh onter tew hours!" soliloquized Archelaus as he went slowly to the barn.

He cast longing glances to the scaffold, but in his tightly fitting armor—thus bandaged and held down, exertion to do justice to his feelings was impossible. Plym, who had been watching the course of events, left his work when he saw his uncle go to the barn.

"What ye want neow?" asked Archelaus as Plym appeared.

"C-ome ter-ter help ye har-harness."

"I don't want no help! Why can't ye 'ten ter yer work?"

"Wha'what be I-I er go-goin' ter d-dew al d-day while ye're g-gone?" asked Plym across Sandy's back as they

were attaching him to the wagon. "I-I ca-can't d-dig tataters all d-day! E-et's d-dreffle hot u-pup thar!"

"Yis ye kin! Ye'll jest 'tend ter yer diggin' all day, an' ye'd better work purty smart, tew! 'Tend ter yer work stiddy!"

"Ha-hadn't I-I b-better st-st-stay roun' ther house? S-somebody'll be er st-st-stealin' things! I-I s-see er man—"

"No ye didn't se er man nuther! Ye wanter laze roun', doin' nothin' ther hull day, don't ye! Ye go ter diggin' this minute er I'll call 'Seneth an' see what she kin dew with ye!"

This caused Plym to start for the potato field, but when he reached the corner of the barn, he stopped to enquire, " 'Spo-'sposin' I-I see s-somebody er c-comin' in here, wh-what'll I-I d-dew?"

"Ye'll jest 'tend ter yer diggin'."

"Wa-wal, 'spo-'sposin' they wa-want su-suthin'?"

"Ef they want anythin', they'll let ye know. They kin see ye an' holler ter ye!"

Plym went reluctantly to his work and Archelaus drove to the house. Owing to Sandy's roving disposition and the ease with which he slipped out of his headstall to test the quality of Aseneth's flowers, Archelaus must stay by till ready to start. In his snug suit of blue and shirt front of board-like stiffness surmounted by a collar of equal inelasticity which threatened to slice off an ear at every deviation from the perpendicular, Archelaus waited and restrained the uneasy Sandy. The clock struck ten. "Comin' soon!" reached him from a distant part of the house. Aseneth's hurried footfall was heard here and there, and the dishes rattled responsive and danced a jig in the pantry. At this stage Plym appeared.

"What ye want, neow?" demanded Archelaus severely.

"Wa-want s-some wa-water!"

"Why don't ye take some ter ther field with ye an' not be er runnin' deown er'ry minute?"

"I-I ain't er c-comin' d-deown er-ry m-minute! Ca-can't er f-feller d-drink when he wa-wants ter?" answered Plym in an injured tone.

"Wal, ye'd better take some with ye."

"I-I aint g-got n-nothin' ter t-take et in! 'S-'sides I-I'd j-jest lives c-come d-deown when I-I'm d-dry!"

"Yis, I know ye would! Ye won't dew nothin' but come deown ther hull day!"

Plym slaked his thirst at the yard pump, looking at his uncle over the rim of the dipper during which he was seized with recurring fits of coughing.

"Sha-shan't I-I fetch ther ambrill?" asked Plym with great show of solicitude. "Ye-ye'll b-be s-sunstruck er set-settin' thar."

"No ye needn't! Go ter yer work!"

"Ef-ef et sh-should k-kinder cloud u-up this arternoon, d-don't ye th-think ther f-fish would b-bite d-deown in ther med-medder?"

"'Seneth!" shouted Archelaus, "won't ye come an' see ter this boy?"

Before the sentence was completed Plym was on his way to the field. A few minutes before eleven o'clock Aseneth appeared, bringing a chair. This was placed beside the wagon and with its aid she climbed upon the seat.

"What kept ye so long?" asked Archelaus.

"Long! Ef I'd nothin' ter dew but git dressed an' set in ther waggin, I mought ha' ben ready hours ergo. Neow," continued Aseneth, taking the reins, "go inter

ther settin' room an' git them things, an' be spry, fer it's er gittin' late!"

Under the circumstances she might as well ask Archelaus to fly as to be spry. He brought out and placed in the wagon a bandbox containing two kittens, a butter box, in which was a wedge of a new cheese, and a pat of butter as a sample of the last churning, a basket of cranberries, a flower pot holding a sickly cactus, a bunch of catnip, one ditto of thoroughwort, some turkey feathers for a fan for Sis' Ann and an immense bouquet of which sunflowers and hollyhocks formed the greater part.

The chair was returned to the house, the door locked and the key put under the doorstep where Plym could not find it as they supposed. Archelaus was taking his seat in the wagon when Plym appeared again.

"What neow?" asked Aseneth.

"I-I'm aw-awful d-dry," replied Plym with show of distress.

"Ye're allus dry when thar's work ter dew, er suthin's ailin' ye."

Plym again quenched his thirst at the pump, Aseneth regarding him meanwhile with manifest displeasure.

"Neow go ter yer work!"

"'Spo-'sposin'," said Plym, drawing his sleeve across his mouth, "'spo-'sposin' ther house gi-gits er fire, wh-what'll I-I dew?"

"Lor' help us!" exclaimed Aseneth with a look of alarm. "What d'ye mean? Ef ye keep erway from ther house, no harm'll come ter't! An' mind ye, ef ye leave yer work an' go ter cuttin' capers, et'll be wuss fer ye, I kin tell ye! Ye'll find yer dinner in ther entry."

Aseneth waited till Plym disappeared around the corner of the barn and then gave orders to Archelaus to

drive on. They had reached nearly the end of the lane that led to the highway when Aseneth ordered Archelaus to stop.

"Whoa!" she exclaimed, at the same time reaching for the reins. "Arch'lus, we've left Becky in ther house! I see her er purrin' roun' when I was er puttin' ther kits in the band-box. Drat ther critter! Turn right roun', Arch'lus! I couldn't take er minute's comfort er thinkin' o' thet critter's rampagin' roun' the house all day! Turn right roun'!"

"What hurt'll she dew?"

"What hurt! What er man ye be!"

They turned about and returned to the house. As they entered the yard, Plym, sitting upon the doorstep with fishing rod at his feet, was busily occupied in attaching a hook to a line. The tin pail containing his dinner was beside him and evidently he was about to depart on a fishing excursion. The sudden appearance of his uncle and aunt disconcerted him. The grassy lane had muffled the roll of wheels, and, interested in his preparations for departure, the returning travelers were upon him before he could escape.

"What be ye goin' ter dew with thet fishin' pole?" demanded Aseneth with indignation in tone and countenance.

"N-nothin'! J-jest er s-s-seein' ef et's all ri-right," replied Plym innocently.

"An' what be ye er goin' ter dew with yer dinner this time o' day, I'd like ter know!"

"Go-goin' ter e-eat et! E-et's er m-most n-noon!"

"Ye can't cheat me, ye young sass-box," proclaimed Aseneth, descending from the wagon without the aid of the chair. "Ef ye don't go ter diggin' taters an' keep

er diggin', ye'll git sech er warmin' ye never dreamed on, an' be sent off, tew."

Plym snatched the rod, and, beyond the reach of his aunt, placed the tackle in the shed, and went dejectedly to his work.

"Neow," said Aseneth, taking the key from its hiding place, "I'll git eout Becky an' we'll be off in er minute. My goodniss!" she added in a lower tone, looking in Plym's direction, "ef I want er goin' er way, I'd give him sech er talkin' tew!"

"I kin git ther cat eout," volunteered Archelaus as Aseneth appeared to make slow progress unlocking the door.

"Ye kin? I'd like ter see ye! Ye'd break up ev'rything in ther house, an' spile my geraniums! Men be so keerless! I wouldn't trest ye in ther woodhouse with er cat."

After Aseneth had "scat" in every room on the ground floor, she ascended to the second story with impatient tread, and looked into her spare chamber. Ah! What a sight her vision caught! There was Becky smoothing her dress and making her toilet on Aseneth's best bed, in the center of that prized coverlid containing 11,296 pieces that had taken the first prize at Ourtown cattle show three consecutive seasons.

Becky, however, smelt the danger when it was afar, retreated under the bed and then whisked down to the kitchen past the open door in the sitting room, left open for her accommodation. On the reappearance of Aseneth, the besieged once more ascended to the upper story, and, finding the attic door ajar, sought a hiding place under the roof at the end of the rafters near the eaves.

Now, to dislodge with speed on a warm day a sly and

sagacious cat of long experience and much discipline, from an attic containing as many different things (some more rare and a deal more useful) as the British museum, is more easily described than executed. Each rafter, on pegs driven into it, held many packages of thoroughwort, thyme, pennyroyal, catnip, marjoram, the mere touch of which brought down or sent up a cloud of dust.

In and out among these dangling snuff bags, round and round about old spinning wheels and a rag carpet loom and other relics of by-gone days, Aseneth charged and countercharged, unmindful of protruding pegs, cob-webs and dust, and at last, Becky, now, it may be supposed fairly aroused in spite of the dense fog prevailing, found the only outlet and again cowered in the kitchen. Aseneth following in hot haste, thoughtfully closed the door behind her and Becky was at bay, and when the porch was opened made exit with a stentorian "skat" in her wake and the dust-pan a jangling after.

No wonder that Archelaus' jaw fell as Aseneth appeared at the sitting room door! No wonder his eyes opened wide with astonishment as he sat in the broiling sun! Wreathed was Aseneth in gossamer web of cob from wide flaring bonnet, now dangling on her back held by the strings around her throat, to hem of bombazine, once black but now the color of an ash bank; her broad face was of the same color, with here and there a freckle visible, and, streaked with rolling perspiration, gave her the appearance of one toiling from morn till eve on the dusty highway in a brisk wind.

"Arch'lus, we won't go ter Sis' Ann's ter day! I'm er most beat eout! I'll hold Sandy while ye take eout ther things an' put 'em in ther settin' room. Lor', I expect thet pat o' butter's purty well nigh melted by this time!

Thet's all I git fer my trouble! Take off yer meetin' clo's an' put Sandy in ther paster, an' go ter tater diggin' till dinner. I sha'n't hev it arly, nuther! Ye'll hev ter wait!"

Archelaus appeared to be pleased with the turn of events, and as soon as in working dress, stole away to the scaffold, where he remained longer than usual and then joined Plym in the potato field. As Plym saw his uncle approaching, he became downcast.

"W-why! B-baint ye-ye go-goin' er way?" he asked in a querulous tone.

"What er boy ye be!" said Archelaus, glancing up and down the rows of potatoes. "Why, ye hain't dug but tew rows all this forenoon! What ye ben er doin' all ther time?"

"N-nothin' 'cept d-dig. I-I tell ye, I-I've ben er dig-diggin' j-jest's t-tight's I-I could jum-jump, ev'ry minute, 'cept when I-I went t-ter put u-pup the fence thet b-brindle c-ceow was er t-tearin' d-deown! W-why don't ye go-go er way?" he added with manifest disappointment.

"I don't b'lieve te've ben er puttin' up any fence! What d'ye think'll become on ye tellin' sech lies?"

"I-I d-donno! I-I haint t-telled none!"

"Don't ye know what ther parster says'll happen ter liars an all sech wicked critters?"

"No-no, an' I-I d-don't keer—"

"He says ye'll be took ter place thousan's an' thousan's of mileses under the arth an' jest put inter red-hot, sizzlin' stove an' kept thar no knowin' heow long, er burnin' an' er burnin', an' ye'll be dryer'n ye've ben ter day, 'nough sight, an' ye wont hev no pump an' er nice tin dipper ter run tew ev'ry minute, nuther. Hope ye'll take warnin'."

"So-sho! Ye c-can't make me b-b'lieve no sech st-stuff's thet! Tallyho d-don't k-know nothin' 'b-'bout et! 'Sides, I-I haint pa-paid 'im u-pup yit," he added in a lower tone.

"Ye haint what?"

"Pa-paid 'im u-u-pup."

"Paid 'im up? What d'ye mean? Paid 'im up fer what?"

"Fer-fer er sass-sassin' me."

"What d'ye mean, ye ordachis boy?" and Archelaus leaned on his hoe-handle aghast and looked at Plym in springing indignation and wrath. "Ye'll come ter some bad end! I knowed et all er ong. I'll tell 'Seneth, an' ef she gits ye in han', ye'll wish ye'd done dif'runt! What d'ye mean by his sassin' ye?"

"T-tother d-day when I-I was in ther st-store, he g-got me inter er cor-corner an' asked ef I-I was er goo-good b-boy an' sech kin' o' n-none o' his b-biz que-questions right er fore er hu-hull lot o' f-folks, t-tew, an' made 'em l-laugh at my stut-stut-stut-her, an' he l-laughed himself."

"Ther parster wants ter dew ye good. He want laughin' at yer stutter! He wouldn't dew no sech thing."

"Y-yis he d-did. I-I s-see 'im er grin-grinnin'. E-er p-purty thing fer er min-minister ter b-be er d-dewin'! I-I'll git s-squar with 'im yit, s-see ef I-I d-don't."

"I won't hear no more sech talk! Jest 'tend ter yer diggin'."

"I-I s-see his b-boy, thet fa-fatty Har-Harold, when I-I was er f-fishin' 'tother d-day, an' when he st-stole my b-bait, I-I p-put er b-birch t'm an' gev 'im er goo-good wh-whuppin', an' I-I j-jest laid in s-some goo-good licks on his pa's er-er count, I-I tell ye. I-I d-did war-warm 'im goo-good!"

"I won't hear ernuther word from ye!"

"Wa-wal," exclaimed Plym, after a long pause, "w-why d-don't ye go erway? Wha-what made ye giv-give et u-pup? Y-ye was lo-long 'nough er git-gittin' ready!"

Before Archelaus could reply, if he intended to, three men leaped the fence and approached, one carrying a string of fish.

CHAPTER II.

A FORMAL INTRODUCTION.

Wherever on this revolving earth in the turning and the twistings in the run of life, speech and act, good or bad, demand attention, the mind with hitch rein fast to the nearest post of observation, may slip out of its headstall immediately (like Sandy roving in quest of succulent grass tufts and fine flavored geranium tops) and make diligent search for any morsel of discovery or crumbs of better knowledge that may present the speakers and the actors in a stronger light.

Archelaus, Aseneth, Plym and Stump, presented in the foregoing chapter in the natural drama wherein is much rising and falling of the curtain, owing to the number of the acts, require formal introduction and truthful portraiture—a setting forth in frames and forms of speech as befits their many virtues and accomplishments.

Archelaus Mottle was tall and lank—a typical Yankee with mild blue eyes. But his features were strong and showed grit and determination tempered with judgment—a nose like a Roman senator, a firm mouth always yielding to a compromising smile, a broad jaw and a resolute chin under a stubby beard. Occasionally, perhaps when he thought of Sis' Ann's exasperating ways, her pin-sticking proclivities, the expression of countenance became mournful, almost depressing. In moods of dejection thus engendered, Archelaus appeared like a man who had been subjected to prison discipline early

in life and had never been able to shake off the effect of it. But he conquered such a brooding and peace-menacing spirit, shook himself, slapped his knee, and came out of the quagmire of the dumps speedily with the familiar half-smile playing around the corners of the mouth.

The merry twinkle of the eyes when brooding was afar, the quiet, sympathetic speech and easy-going methods, proclaimed Archelaus Mottle to be a peaceful, contented man of imperturbable good nature (usually) and kindness of heart. But while Aseneth appeared to hold the reins of government and the purse strings, always taut, yet Archelaus, when occasion demanded, set forth his opinion and made it law.

Sometimes, not often, a wanderer ostensibly in search of bread, reached the house porch before Aseneth or Stump blocked the way. Aseneth harangued with many emphatic words and pointing with her fat forefinger to the highway, bade him begone and waste no time, and gave her opinion of him and his loitering with vigorous slaps of advice thrown in.

Usually Archelaus held his peace, for he believed the sentence just, but more than once his sympathy had been aroused by a word or look of the wanderer, and, with few words or none, led him to the kitchen, placed him at the table, helped him generously and filled his pockets as he departed.

Aseneth Mottle was a comely matron, past middle life, six feet two in stature and of massive build and proportion with broad, rubicund, freckled face and double chin. She was voluble and emphatic, and her tongue had a keen edge, a quick stroke, good aim, also, and sent home that with which it was charged fearlessly and with spirit in any presence high or low.

Despite the sharpness of her tongue—merely habitual and not indicative of any acerbity of temper—Aseneth Mottle was a most estimable woman, and a valued member of the community—sympathetic, charitable, generous, and as practical and honest as she was blunt and outspoken. If her neighbors—and all the indwellers of Ourtown from Twin Peak to Shadrack Basin, from Six-Eye Hamlet to Cripple Brook, were neighbors—were in any distress of mind or body, no one responded with things practical and necessary more cheerfully or to better purpose than Aseneth Mottle. If death was a visitor in any family, rich or poor, Aseneth's softest dialectic speech soothed and comforted—and her voice when not keyed to earnestness or denunciation, was like a lullaby—and the touch of her hand, gentle as a child's, ministered to the needful and practical wants of the occasion. In any stress of mind and matter of domestic order, Aseneth Mottle, among her own sex, was the first physician summoned.

When Matilda Smedge, over in Hitch Pin Ledge, broke her thigh and it was believed was about to take leave of this life, Aseneth was sent for immediately. When she found seven grown-up daughters and four grown-up sons sitting in ashes and dirt, wringing their hands and wiping their eyes on jack towels (ordinary handkerchiefs being far too small to meet the demand of tears) Aseneth was silent a moment, for, not having the benefit of a liberal education, she could not immediately summon words to do her bidding as the case demanded, but, according to one of the Smedge boys, "She got her wind at last and sailed in!"

"Nice pack o' girls ye be, ther hull seven o' ye! D'ye s'pose with all yer moanin' an' er takin' on so, an' er goin' on in this shif'less way's goin' ter help yer mother

git her leg mended? Why don't ye try ter cheer her up by er doin' up er har ef ye kin git ter dew nothin' else, an' er bein' er leetle like folks with er leetle gumption in 'em. Thar's ther sink full o' dirty dishes an' ther floor haint ben swept fer nigh er week I should jedge, an' ther fire gone out, an' no hot water, an' I'll be boun' ef thar aint er cat on ther table right in ther middle o' ther platter er gnawin' o' thet ham bone! Skat! ye critter, heow bold ye be! Ef I'd hed ther bringin' up o' ye, ye wouldn't dare git on ther table.

"An' all this er goin' on an' ye er settin' an' snufflin's ef ye all hed yer bones broke 'stid yer mother. Here yeou boy bigger'n yer pa, bring in some wood an' build er fire, an' ev'ry one o' ye stir roun' an' dew suthin', an' clar up this litter. Jast riles me ter see ye've got so little sense an' besom in ye! I tell ye when things happun an' bones git broke, an' er feller bein' falls deown, ther way ter dew is ter keep er dewin' an' not go all ter pieces like er wash tub er settin' in ther sun! Neow, I'm er goin' in ter see yer mother, an' ef ye don't hev this kitchen put ter rights, I'll dew et myself when I come eout! Keep er dewin' is my motter!"

The four sons began to bring in wood and make a din around the stove, and the seven daughters, smiling, aye, laughing outright the first time since the accident, switched their hair into knots as though life hung by one of its strands, and the dirt began to fly and the dishes to rattle.

Meanwhile Aseneth, changed in a twinkling to the gentlest of nurses, with low and patient voice, caused the sufferer to forget pain or to bear it more bravely. And when Aseneth came into the kitchen on her way out, the seven daughters, no longer in the habiliments of woe, crowded around her, and Polly Theresa, the tallest and

who had the longest arms, embraced her and gave her a representative hug.

"I allus said ye ware ther nicest girls, spry's kittens an' tidy's could be! Don't let nothin' git ther upper han' o' ye! Keep yer dander up an' yer har, tew, whatever happuns! Et don't do no good ter go er sorrewin' with ther fire eout an' ther dishes in er swamp o' dirt! Yer mother ain't so bad off's she might be! She'll be up ergin! Keep er slicked up an' er smilin', an' keep er dewin', keep er dewin'!"

But on the Mottle farm to impostors, Sunday poachers and strollers, as well as mischievous boys, Aseneth had an outspoken aversion, and was equal in strategy and determination to any combination of idlers that might invade the domain of the farm. No straying poacher (of sympathy, food and clothing) of any degree of vagabondage visited the farm a second time if Aseneth and Stump had free course with him and did their duty by him. When such an enemy of labor (and soap) turned into the lane that led from the highway to the house, Aseneth, if she saw him, and her eye was as sharp as her tongue, and as quick, with Stump as vanguard, went forth to meet him and attacked him with such a volley of words, accompanied by appropriate gestures, that the startled invader, keeping his eye upon her, retreated backwards to the highway and then turned and ran with Stump at full cry at his heels, and did not slack speed till at a safe distance and Stump lost grip on second wind.

Aseneth was an excellent housekeeper and versed in all the culinary arts and sciences—the usual combination of skill when good digestion waits on a hearty and discriminating appetite, and while performing her domestic duties with exemplary neatness and dispatch, had

an overseeing eye to the outdoor operations. If the weeds in the corn or potato field were more active than Archelaus and Plym, in an immense sun bonnet, she went forth and laid them (the weeds) low, at the same time expressing her candid opinion on the general uselessness of men and boys—especially boys.

Plympton Hanker, a boy of eighteen, Aseneth's nephew, completed the Mottle household. Plym, as he was called, was an awkward, uncouth lad, whose mind appeared to be engrossed with the problem of how to escape the performance of allotted tasks. From day to day, apparently, he solved the problem to his own satisfaction. The fish in the meadow brook, the woodchucks in the north clover field and the rabbits and squirrels in Hokopokonoket Swamp interested him more than encroaching weeds. Archelaus rebuked and spoke not always mildly of the future of evil-doers, and Aseneth stormed and threatened with dismissal in her sternest and most emphatic dialect, but neither disturbed him or interefered with his solution of the problem referred to or with his enjoyment of life generally.

Plym had come to the full stature of man, but he had reached this stage with such headlong speed, his arms and legs had lengthened so rapidly beyond the stretch of clothing, that neither his aunt nor his uncle realized, apparently, that the boy who came to them, weak and puny in his twelfth year and alarmed them by the indifference of his appetite, was now a man and entitled to the consideration due to budding manhood. To them he was still a boy, subject to the same sharp reprimand and the same familiarity of speech that directed him when he wore short clothes. This is not the worst thing that may befall a man or boy, but its effect is to belittle, in a sense, the opinion of the man or boy of himself.

Throughout the land today may be found men and women with beards and wrinkles, even crow's feet, remaining single and clinging to the old home, who occupy the same place in the minds of parents, and, it is hoped, in their affections, as in youth. And this treatment, thoughtless and perhaps kind, saps the life and vigor of constitutions not strong enough to rise above its influence and be men and women in spite of it.

Plym had not suffered sufficiently to cause any check of spirit, naturally prone to rise above small trouble, but his boyish, childish pranks and speech were attributable in part to this relegation to a state of childhood—to his subjection to the small talk and the petty ways of those who dealt with the child in bib still clinging to the nursing bottle. Plym was the victim of a stutter supposed to be hereditary since his father and his grandfather had been subject to a similar impediment. Occasionally the stutter appeared to tighten its hold and to give Plym no speech leeway at all, while at other times, his tongue was unfettered and could hold its own in any wordy contest. Life and its responsibilities did not occupy a large space in his mind, but this idea was expressed often:

"S-seem's ef er-er m-most ev'ry b-bod-body's g-g-got ter hev s-suthin' ter k-keep 'em d-deown an' ter-ter m-make 'em work har-harder ter g-g-git u-pup! T-thar's Ji-Jim B-Ben-Bennett with er clu-bub-bub foot, an' t-thar's St-St-Steve San-Sanders, bor-born d-deef, an' t-thar's S-S-Sam Wick-Wick-Wickens 't-'t-'thout any p-palate, an' here I-I b-be s-s-sound's er nut, b-but c-can't g-gi-git no whar er d-dew noth-nothin' 'cause I-I g-g-got er stut-stut-stut—wa-wal, grea-great hemlock! I-I j-jest gi-give et u-pup! I-I ca-can't say noth-nothin' when I-I wa-want t-tew!"

Plym's inseparable companion was an ill-looking dog

called "Stump." The year before, Aseneth Mottle entertained a city boarder who wanted air since his lungs were failing, and nowhere in the world has the air less pollution—leached and strained and perfumed through and through by pine groves and sassafrass glades—than on the hills of Ourtown. When the boarder went away, knowing that life was short (it came to a stop in the following winter) he gave Plym, for whom he had conceived a great liking, his sporting outfit—a double-barreled shotgun, a revolver, fishing tackle and the dog Stump. The former owner of Stump, who had traveled throughout the civilized world and in some parts not yet within the pale, in search of health and never finding it (if he did his lungs were not able to take advantage of it), declared that in all his travels (and he had seen the dogs of Constantinople) he had never looked upon a dog so hideous, so grotesquely ugly as Stump, and the object of ownership was to possess what was, probably, the most ill-favored dog in the world.

Evidently Stump was a cross of a high-bred bull, having a bull head, distorted by a mouth a third too large, and a nondescript body with bow legs. Some butcher who thought that his knowledge of the facture of dogs exceeded that of nature, cut off his ears with barbarous clip of shears and brought the broad axe to bear upon his tail, leaving a four-inch stump. The consumptive boarder declared, however, that the loss of tail, probably, saved the life of Stump or made it longer, for if the tail was out of proportion, and the stump showed that to be the case, and if Stump had wagged the whole unlimited tail as vigorously as he did what was left of it, then must life have ended long ago—resulting simply in a wearing down to death of the body to keep so much tail in motion.

But with all his ugliness, thus curtailed and shorn of ears, and saved from an early grave, Stump had good qualities that recommended him to many friends. Like his new master, Plym, he was peaceable and friendly with no disposition to quarrel—to put chips on shoulders for the purpose of knocking them off and making a mill, but in any emergency, like his master, also, when his rights were invaded and gross insult cast upon him—then was there an unbuckling of energy—a letting loose of force that astonished whatever fell in the way and so offended.

Another bequest of the consumptive boarder had an immediate effect upon the life of Plym, resulting in the leading up to better things. He (the consumptive boarder) had given much attention to personal attire and the adornment of his person, having a great store of fine clothing, indeed, everything in this life a man could wish for except health and the power to cling to life. He turned over to Plym, having no use for them in the next world, thirty-seven neckties, no two alike, and all beautiful, in color ranging from sombre black to butterfly yellow and sky blue.

Plym immediately bartered an even dozen of the ties with the clerk in the village pharmacy, down by Spider Leg Lane, for scented soap and hair oil. This bargain left twenty-five, and these he hung in his room on a wire, and on Sunday morning, when he kept his bed till daylight, he could make his necktie plans for the week—select a different one for every day. Thus he began at one end of the line of ties, wore one every day—a different one—and when he reached the other end began again.

Up to the necktie period Plym in summer was con-

tent to go barefoot with his trousers, often hung by one suspender over a checked shirt, rolled to the knee. In this picturesque costume, unmindful of summer boarders and dandy leg jims in creases and pumps, with his flopping straw hat, he went boldly through the village street to the postoffice, and no one dared to guy him unless a safe distance was between and his legs in running order. Plym was enough to deal with, but Plym and Stump, ready to resent any insult cast upon his master, made a force too strong to contend with and escape with light punishment.

But when the necktie brilliancy burst upon Plym, it threw light upon a feature not before illuminated to the eye of Plym. What is the use of having anything if no one knows you have it? Thus reasoned Plym. Neckties were to be worn and wear them he would, cost what it might—a different one every day. If there was anything in the world to flee from, according to the mind of Plym, it was the wearing of a collar. To wear one on Sunday was like thrusting wholesale misery into life. But the neckties must be worn, and must have collars to give them respectability, and therefore Plym put good money into paper collars, then beginning to bid for economical buyers.

Thus the conquest or reformation of Plym in the matter of dress and tidiness began. He rolled down his trousers, wore two suspenders and was driven into shoes at last, for a turkey-red tie and bare feet, not always of natural color, even to the unsophisticated mind of Plym, were not in exact congruity. The neckties thus served as a beneficent factor, and had shored up Plym toward manhood or to an appreciation of its demands upon him more than anything else that had come into his life.

Plym was a general favorite if he did cling, owing to his bringing up, to boyish ways and speech. Of the science of wrestling he knew nothing, but no man or boy in Ourtown could throw him in a square tussle, although he was neither giant nor prodigy. He was good-natured, open-hearted, without a quarrelsome fiber in his composition, but every boy in town knew that it was dangerous to flaunt in Plym's face any reminder of his impediment. Anything else he could abide and take in good part, but the man or boy who dared to mock, felt the weight of his hand. Even then Plym did not fall into a passion and rave, but quietly, as though discharging a solemn duty, took the mocker in hand till he cried for quarter. If the offender was beyond reach, Plym waited his opportunity to square the account. One day, a boy on horseback rode along the pike and shouted to Plym:

"Hul-hul-hullo, Plym! How b-b-b-be ye er git-git-gittin' er-er-er lo-lo-lo-long? How's yer-yer stut-stut-stut—O, d-dear—stut-stut-stut—O, I-I gi-gi-gi-give e-et u-pup!"

Plym only shook his hoe at him and muttered, "Wa-wait t-t-till I-I k-k-ketch ye!"

Four months afterward, he met this mocking boy on the church steps as they were going in to service. Plym spoke to him and invited him out to the shed where the horses were hitched.

"C-c-come eout, Char-Charley! G-g-g-got s-some-thin' t-ter sh-sh-show ye! T-time 'nough 'f-'fore ther me-me-meetin' b-b-begins!"

The unsuspecting boy followed him. What Plym wanted to show him was his uncle's new whip. He dragged the boy to the rear of the shed and lashed him with the whip, and, with conscience clear, returned to

the church and listened attentively to Tallyho's sermon.

But enough. Archelaus, Aseneth, Plym and even the remnant, Stump, have each a winding and in some places an uphill and thorny path to follow. Let whatever be lacking in words be supplied in deeds.

CHAPTER III.

THF LULLYWICK RECEPTION.

In the office of the "Open Eye," a morning, evening and all the year round newspaper (of no party) devoted to news, good or bad, and the pockets and the politics of the owners, the usual morning stir and bustle consequent upon the arrival of editors and reporters and the tackling to the day's duties, was yielding to the orderly quiet and repose necessary to thinking minds, especially those of large caliber, about to unlimber for the benefit of the world at large.

Brooding hush at last settled upon the dingy place, disturbed only by the trial scratch of pens to show the quality of nib, the rustle of paper and the purring of the office cat. Water bugs crowded and jostled each other at the mouth of every ink-well to take a final sip of refreshment, for long experience, and an occasional loss of life, had sharpened instinct and taught that pens sharp as needles (figuratively dull as picks) would soon begin to fly and increase speed as the springing thought called for ink to make record.

Mr. Sandwin Yeksy, editor, local engineer and remorseless apportioner of reporters' time leeway, was a man of brains and banged hair, sprightly legs and unquiet stomach, the squirmings and untimely twists of which, owing to ill-judged burdens imposed, occasionally disturbed the serenity of mind and gray matter. But on this morning, indigestion, weary and worn out with repeated warning, and discouraged in its protests, failed

to thrust in a throb. In consequence, all branches of the service put on smiles and cheerfulness and thanked the Lord for his tender mercy in thus remembering them, and the poet laureate of the "Open Eye" screwed up his courage to consult Mr. Yeksy on the condition of the money market with the possibility in view of negotiating a loan till next pay day.

Mr. Yeksy summoned Mr. Ralph Markman Paige, reporter and all-night servant of the "Open Eye." "Mr. Paige, Mrs. Lullywick, wife of the Hon. Theodore Lullywick, a Gotham street merchant, aspiring and at election time perspiring politician, and prospective high office-holder, if his wife's money holds out—Madame Lullywick, I say, gives a reception this evening, and as Lullywick is a subscriber and a liberal advertiser (he pays, too), we must make record in bold-faced type (that will harmonize well) and our choicest English—give the names of prominent guests, describe the ladies' toilets, the decorations, the supper and whatever the 'brilliancy of the event' suggests. From what I know of Lullywick I imagine that to him a reporter is a very common grubber, an inferior being, a menial, and therefore he may expect you to call at the back door, take a seat on the ash barrel and wait for particulars. But the 'Open Eye' does not ask its representatives to be fawning slaves or men of low degree of servitude. Its reporters go in by the front door with their heads up or they do not go at all. Here is the invitation. You have a right to attend as a guest, and I hope you will do so. Lullywick occupies one of the Bond street palaces. He is ambitious, politically and otherwise, and this reception is another bid for social distinction and—and votes. If you do not go as guest get the facts in any way convenient and agreeable."

"I shall attend as guest!" replied Paige decisively, and hurried away to attend to other duties. During the afternoon he met Stanley Bruce, reporter for the "Morning Waker."

"Have you an assignment this evening?" asked Paige.

"I have! Every evening, as you know to your cost, for you say that I wake you and rob of sleep by my noisy and late—that is, early—coming. Tonight I wait upon the Hon. Theodore Lullywick, top-knot of Bond street, and with fine words butter his parsnips, however unsavory the parsnips may be."

"I'm ordered on duty at the same place. We'll join forces and march on the Lullywicks in a body, a solid battalion of two! How shall we proceed?"

"O, call before the show is over; send in our cards; see somebody; write down everything; be patronized—snubbed; be offered food, for some persons think, apparently, that a reporter has no regular roosting place, and is always on the point of starvation, and other indignities, and at last, be shown the door, politely, of course, and as much as requested to make ourselves scarce."

"Stanley Bruce, are you a self-respecting, independent, moral citizen? Will you be a side-door, back-door, crouching, timidly-waiting menial to puff the vanity and flaunt the wealth of these Lullywicks? Where's your spirit? Let us put on dress suits and be guests! We're invited. I tell you, Stanley, if you are still at work on that boasted society novel about which in your sleep you talk and rave in nightmarish frenzy, you must improve your opportunity—now the Lullywick opportunity. The richest harvest of the season, perhaps, for you! Will you go?"

"I will; we'll go early; stay late; make the Lullywicks'

acquaintance, everyone; put on all our airs and anyone who dares to look down on us— Well, good-bye—see you at supper and arrange the details of the invasion."

Paige and Bruce were students in the primary class of actual journalism. Three months before they had been graduated with honor at a New England university. Of the highest character, scholarly, ambitious, they sought in the profession of journalism what others hoped for, struggled for in medicine, law or theology—bread and fame. For little money, or bread, and no fame and for unlimited experience, Paige and Bruce gave ten, fifteen or twenty hours of service a day, aye, twenty-four hours when an unusual amount of experience was ready for the sickle. Thus the bread part of the salary remained stationary, except suffering reduction when other papers encroached upon the domain and the subscription lists of the "Open Eye" and the "Morning Waker" respectively.

Ralph Markman Paige was tall, broad-shouldered, muscular as a giant, with hair and complexion nearly as dark and swarthy as the lighter-faced descendants of Ham. He was loquacious, earnest, if not impetuous, but honest, dignified, with fine sense of honor and the proprieties of life.

Stanley Bruce was nearly as tall and as dark as Paige, sturdy, imperturbable, taciturn, with high idea of duty, and fearless and determined. Paige and Bruce occupied contiguous lodging rooms, and, similarly related to the papers which they represented, were often in company.

A paper published the morning after the Lullywick reception, the editor of which evidently speculated in Lullywick gold, published this at the head of a column of "dash and splatter:"

"There was unusual noise and confusion throughout

the length and breadth of Bond street and rampant uproar near its eastern terminus. There was hurrying of feet of both man and horse, crash of wheel on wheel, rattle and riot upon pavement, hoarse cries, exclamations, orders, commands from liveried lackeys by the score in waiting upon the lords and ladies contributing to the brilliancy of the grandest social event of the season. In a blaze of light the equipages of the elite of the city turned into Bond street from its many tributaries and came to a dead halt before the palatial residence of the Hon. Theodore Lullywick."

Bah! What stultifying verbiage! Usual quiet reigned in Bond street. The few carriages that rolled up to the Lullywick mansion came, doubtless with as much flourish and confusion as possible, considering the probable character of the occupants. An empty cask is more resonant than a full one, and a cricket drooning under the eaves, disturbs the night more than the ruminating ox.

Paige and Bruce passed the outposts, appeared before the reception committee, the Lullywick family, and to Mr. Lullywick introduced each other. Nothing ever surprised the wary and politic Lullywick. He shook hands with the reporters and welcomed them according to polite formula, but Madame Lullywick, who had heard the introduction, drew back, turned to other guests, and Paige and Bruce passed on.

Madame Lullywick was tall, coarse and angular in form and feature with high cheek bones, low forehead, deep set, cold gray eyes so near together that they appeared to be exchanging significant glances across the bridge of a nose depressed in the center. The thin lips of a large mouth when not relaxed into what was intended to be a smile, always cautious and dignified, were

drawn tightly together and expressed determination if not defiance. Even with smile embellishment, the countenance was sinister, forbidding—something was lurking there, held in ambush that apparently fretted under restraint and was ready at a slight loosing of the bonds to fly in the face of whatever opposed or crossed—something that caused the spectator under the direct scrutiny of the eyes to recoil involuntarily.

Madame Lullywick wore a low-neck, sleeveless scarlet silk or satin with black lace overdress, a large diamond necklace and pendant, three diamond bands on each arm and yellow gloves. The two Misses Lullywick were patterns of their mother in feature, in manner and in dress, and the two Lullywick boys, or young men, had the same facial outline and expression, more unattractive in masculine strength, disfigured by dissipation and by "insolent leering," often the accompaniment of the uncouth and the untutored when better fortune suddenly brings to view.

And what of the guests! Political aspirants impelled by the itch for office; political speculators, trucklers and sycophants, hoping to hear the jingle of Lullywick gold; business acquaintances and a few obsequious state and city officials, always in fear of losing their heads—a heterogeneous, ill-assorted company. An incautious admission of one of the Lullywick boys revealed the fact that twelve hundred invitations had been distributed, while not more than a hundred had accepted.

The Lullywick house with its high ceilings, carving and fresco was barely sufficient for the one hundred guests. In every room, hall, nook and corner, in large shoals and in little puddles, making out into the clear space was a miscellaneous collection of bric-a-brac, "articles of virtu," elegant and costly trumpery that blocked

the way at every turn—an extraordinary litter suggesting a museum on leave of absence, not yet in order. Fortunate that eleven hundred of those bidden to the feast remained away, otherwise in a real aristocratic jam and jumble this colony of foolish and fragile stuff might be imperiled.

The reception is at its height; the guests have arrived and made their bows, and it is time for the Lullywick group, still a solid and receiving phalanx, to yield to the social duties of host, when, lo! appears a guest not included, probably, in the twelve hundred. He is tall, thin and his hair is unkempt; a long mustache gives him a fierce look and a week's growth of stubble on his face shows the absence of razor. He wears a long gray coat buttoned to the chin and the end of the collar on one side stands up above the ear.

When first seen the unbidden guest wore a slouch hat well over his eyes, but considerately removes it and holds it in his hand; his trousers are too long and hang in folds at the bottom, and his shoes have seen no blacking for many days. He goes straight to Mr. Lullywick, shakes hands with him, clings to the hand with both hands, and shakes again and again. Mr. Lullywick shows no sign of annoyance. He is a consummate actor and can look a streak of lightning in the face and not flinch. The man turns to Madame Lullywick, but she shrinks from him, hesitates, then changes her mind and extends her hand. He seizes it and shakes again and gain. Madame Lullywick "throws her eyes" at him in a way to make a sober man quail; he turns his head on one side, closes one eye and looks at her; he turns his head on the other side, closes the other eye and looks at her again, and, with a cunning leer and a lurch and another wrench of the hand, he exclaims in a loud whisper, "It's all right!" The

Misses Lullywick flee as he approaches; the Lullywick boys, their hands deep in their pockets, refuse to shake his offered hand and glance at him and appear to be ready to remove him by force. But Lullywick seizes one by the arm, draws him aside, whispers fiercely to him, and the son consents to receive the stranger cordially. Lullywick takes the other son in hand with the same result. He was unmoved, but Madame Lullywick—what a tumult raged within, as indicated by the hot flush, the vindictive glitter of the eyes, the heaving breast and the effort, unsuccessful, to appear unconcerned.

Every gesture, look even in repose, proclaimed her to be a passionate woman of fiery, impulsive nature, and anyone dominated by a spirit akin to hers, cannot conceal its protest any more than the deep sea can smooth its surface. While this play was going on, the guests looked on in silent astonishment. There was in it that which chilled and gave rise to strange thoughts and speculations. Lullywick, calm as a statue, in a group of his guests, addressing his son, said: "Do not interfere with him! Humor him! Better so than the annoyance and the report of ejection!" One of the traits of character of the self-confident, wary man is his belief that his sight is keener and his art finer than others'. Lullywick might dismiss this man from his thoughts with a wave of the hand, apparently, as an inebriate who had accidentally strayed out of his path, yet among the guests were men with as many sharpened wits as Lullywick could claim, and those who observed closely and appreciated the effect of this man's appearance upon Madame Lullywick were loth to believe that she was a stranger to the unbidden guest. This strange figure now found its way into a side room, stood a while to admire a wall painting and to stroke his chin, muttering, "H'm! H'm! Pretty

fine! Best I've seen!" and then sank elbow deep into an easy chair. From this point he caught sight of the loaded table in the dining room; his face broadened into a smile, and, with an easy grunt of "H'm! H'm!" he slouched toward it; the guests saw him no more, for the door of the dining room closed upon him, and he was probably given exit in the rear of the house.

When the unbidden guest disappeared, Lullywick approached the reporters, and invited them into the library and gave them the names of guests and other particulars for the benefit of the readers of the "Open Eye" and of the "Morning Waker." During the interview the Lullywick boys stood near and stared insolently. Lullywick was gracious and condescending, as such men are likely to be under similar circumstances. He might despise reporters, probably did, but he was too politic to exhibit even an inclination to snub. He withdrew, and the reporters continued to write—to make copy—on the ebony table at which Lullywick had seated them. The junior Lullywicks, flushed with wine, were still present and still staring. At last one of them exclaimed, "What yer waitin' for?" Receiving no answer, the other one remarked, "If ye've got what yer come for, why don't yer go?" The reporters did not even look up. Paige wrote on. Bruce stopped to sharpen a pencil, catching the shavings in a bit of paper, folding it carefully and placing it in his pocket. Before the Lullywick louts could interfere further, if they intended to, Mr. Gales, an elderly merchant with whom both the reporters were acquainted, approached and sat down at the table, and the Lullywicks departed.

Against the wall was an elegant bookcase with plate-glass doors full of books in binding to harmonize with the surroundings. Mr. Gales, who had literary tastes and

a fine large library, attempted to remove a volume of Scott's novels, when the discovery was made that the set of Scott was a block of wood carved and gilded. Another block was labeled "Thackeray," another "Dickens," and thus with all authors in the case—a wood pile in blue and gold.

"I'm ready!" exclaimed Bruce, closing his note-book with a snap, "let's go; seen enough; too much; stay to supper? No, don't want any supper; had my supper; one's enough! Paige, when we go out, keep near me if you please; the two barbarians may take their hands out of their pockets and let fly at us!"

"Supper or not, stay awhile," said Mr. Gales. "Come into the drawing room. I'll introduce you!"

They passed into the reception room and Mr. Gales introduced them right and left. In the angle of the room, almost hid from view by growing plants and the tangle of bric-a-brac, was a guest who apparently had little interest in this parade—this vain show of mock courtesy. If this "radiant maiden" had been an active member of this glittering company, she would have been conspicuous as the solitary rose stands forth in a bouquet of tiger lilies and hollyhocks. Her only ornaments were nature's gifts—light hair, blue eyes, full red lips and a clear, fresh complexion. Her countenance, while strong and intellectual, was yet refined and beautiful. The dress was plain, high in the neck with long, close-fitting sleeves without plait or ruffle or adornment of any kind except lace at the neck and wrists. Mr. Gales discovered this shy, silent guest, was introduced and presented Bruce, who was tacking in and out aimlessly among the bric-a-brac breakers in that part of the room. The entertainment began to have some charm for Bruce. In this presence, apparently, he did not heed the flight of time.

The dining room was thrown open and the guests with usual promptness took possession, but Bruce and his companion remained behind the palms and heeded not the clatter of knife and fork or the exclamations of corks released.

Not until the guests began to depart did Bruce come out of the enchantment that held him. Mr. Lullywick held out his hand graciously at parting and Madame Lullywick gave the reporters a look—a sharp almost angry visual thrust—that they will remember.

"Stanley Bruce," exclaimed Paige when they reached the street, "I've been waiting an hour for you, my life in danger, perhaps, for the Lullywick ruffians appeared to have designs upon me, and I trembled for you in your snug corner. I saw them looking in your direction. Very bad form for you to monopolize a guest in that audacious way! Early in the evening you were in a hurry to go, but after you were anchored behind those palms—"

"Made a discovery!" interrupted Bruce, not heeding Paige's thrust, "that young lady, Miss Canton, is a member of the Lullywick household! Yes, sir; that refined, intellectual, beautiful woman is a companion—lives in the same house—Zounds!—with that coarse and brutal set, with that woman with the terrible eyes—eyes like gimlets with their points red-hot! How did I learn that? Why, naturally or otherwise, I asked in what part of the city she lived. She's way up in everything—has read the public library right through from A to Z; never saw anything like it; she's no blue stocking; there's no boldness or assumption; all modesty, earnestness and gentleness. O, I'd give much to know why she's there! And if possible and proper, I'll find out! I tell you, Ralph Mark-

man Paige, if the Lullywicks lived in Mortor street next door to the livery stable—"

"Took the hostlers to board," put in Paige.

"Yes, and rented rooms in the attic to pack peddlers."

"Took in washing?"

"Yes, and Lullywick kept a junk store or the three balls in the basement."

"And one of the boys carried beer in Covent Garden—"

"And the other drove a broom in Bambury Square—"

"They'd be—"

"They'd be where many of their betters are!"

At the corner of the street they met a man reeling from side to side and taking up as much room as an ox team, and muttering, "H'm! H'm! But it's all right! H'm! H'm!" The unbidden guest was taking an airing. The reporters gave him all the sidewalk, but were unable to dodge him. The man stumbled upon Paige and would have fallen if he had not been held up. He apologized with many words, and, like other men in his condition, became friendly and talkative. Seizing Paige's arm, he held on and repeated his apology and thanks, and, changing the subject, still clinging to Paige, declared that he had never tasted such rich liquor in his life before and that he was going back for more. Paige freed himself from the man's grasp and bade him good-night, when two men, running and out of breath, approached.

"Don't yer know nothin'!" shouted one of them. "Don't you know yer ——— better'n ter come ter a gentleman's house when yer wan't invited?"

"We were invited!" replied Paige.

"That's er lie! Yer c'n take that!" and he attempted to strike Paige in the face, but his aim was not good. Paige dodged and the unbidden guest came between

them, throwing himself with a lurch into the breach and falling upon the aggressor with great earnestness and hard fists, exclaiming under his breath that he would stand by his friends and that he'd "be d———d if a dozen men could get away with him when his blood was up." Paige and Bruce left precipitately as the unbidden guest and the Lullywick boys rolled into the gutter in a disgraceful tangle.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RISE OF THE LULLYWICKS.

The Hon. Theodore Lullywick, as such, had a limited acquaintance. Plain Theodore Lullywick had been known and appreciated for many years. When and by what means, foul or fair, the much-abused and honorable title of "Hon." was first applied to the name of Lullywick, introduced into such dishonorable company, is unknown.

Well established it is that the Hon. Theodore Lullywick had never been elected to any honorable body either of private or public concern, although he was at this time bidding for a place among honorable men in the legislature of the commonwealth; and it is and ever was difficult if not impossible to elicit from a responsible source honorable mention of the name of Lullywick; and it is further set forth ready to be sworn to that it was not at all uncommon to find bold and intrepid persons who affirmed with emphasis and improper adjectives that the Hon. Theodore Lullywick never performed an honorable act in his life—if he had, the details had not come to light; and others more emphatic and libellous declared that the Hon. Theodore Lullywick was an accomplished rascal whose services long ago should have been secured by the commonwealth in one of its institutions where men are restrained for their own good and that of others.

However that may be, the use of the honorable prefix to the name of Lullywick is still unexplained and may be disposed of by supposing that it—the honorable prefix

—was an embellishing accompaniment of gewgaw, plate and equipage.

Theodore began life as a clerk. Those who knew him at that time remember him as a silent, cautious man, utterly without principle and unmindful of the welfare or the opinion of others, provided his own well-being was not dependent on either. When he was about forty years of age, while on a pleasure excursion in another state, he met Mrs. Isabella Tukins, a widow without weeds or weeds that had faded quickly, although the deceased Tukins had been in his grave hardly a twelve-month, but in possession of a large and lately inherited fortune. This was Lullywick's opportunity, and he improved it as the sequel proved, for within ten days after she met the courtly Lullywick, Mrs. Tukins became Madame Lullywick.

Isabella Boye, afterwards Tukins, and more recently Lullywick, was the only child of Fenworth Boye, a wealthy manufacturer. Isabella, by the early death of her mother, under the care of servants, came to womanhood a passionate, headstrong woman, wholly devoted to her own selfishness and love of display. She married Alfred Tukins, wealthy, and a manufacturer, like her father. The world was kind, prosperity smiled upon them and life had no wrinkles in it, or none that the public eye took cognizance of, usually or often the case when there is a full pocket to draw from. But at last Alfred Tukins by mismanagement and with his wife's extravagance too to help him the wrong way, became hopelessly bankrupt and only an overseer in the mill of which he had been sole owner. This was a fatal blow to Alfred Tukins, financially, and otherwise, from which he never recovered; but to Mrs. Tukins the failure was

of little concern since she drew from her father what her husband failed to provide.

The fact that her husband was a mill operative touched her pride in a soft place, but the pang was only momentary. She flourished as before and her husband was good enough to keep in the background. Two boys and two girls were born, whom Fenworth Boye promised to educate and help on in the world. But alas! for the plans of men, Fenworth Boye failed first in business, then in health and finally in life, leaving nothing, having nothing to leave to his daughter or her children.

The Tukins family now felt the weight of the heavy hand of poverty, the real, pinching kind. Mrs. Tukins' temper was never a thing to sit down by and make much of—rather, something to shun even at the expense of climbing a barbed wire fence. Still, in prosperity, those who were obliged to summer and winter it, might be able to endure and live. But when the world jostled her aside and poverty placed a horny hand upon her then the kinks in temper became great gnarls and knots. As soon as old enough the boys entered the mill to eke out the family expenses.

During this time, that is the time since the death of her father, Mrs. Tukins attempted to win the favor of Roger Boye, her father's wealthy brother, but he was very careful of his favor and still more so of his money. He was not a niggard by any means, and was willing to help his niece and did, but Mrs. Tukins scorned such small gifts as five dollar notes and small change. 'Twas not the half pint that she wanted but the full gallon. As the present failed to do her bidding, she planned to bring the future to her feet.

As already recorded the Tukins family was having a snug tussle with everything that life demanded to make

itself comfortable. The boys worked in the mill and the girls ran at large without thought on their part or their mother's of educational improvement, and Alfred Tukins, the father, drudged on while Mrs. Tukins applied the lash to all and made it snap and tingle as few have the gift to do. But all things come to an end. Alfred Tukins, worn out with hard work, dissipation, disappointment and his wife's lashings, laid down his life and found rest at last in death.

If Mrs. Tukins was a "bitter wind" before, she was a fear inspiring tornado now. All the gall in her nature, and little else appeared, came to the surface. The girls, Mollie and Nettie Tukins, entered the mill, and perhaps Mrs. Tukins herself would at last be driven to handle a shuttle. But all this misery of poverty and hot temper came to an end. Roger Boye was dead, leaving no heirs and no will, and Isabella Tukins, the next of kin, was sole heir. Need it be said that there was great rejoicing and uproar in the Tukins family when this news burst upon its members. Enough is it to say that Mrs. Tukins with her sons and daughters marched out of that manufacturing town, the scene of so much that were better forgotten, with their heads up, shook its dust from their feet and went on toward Prodigality and Extravagance, where they arrived in due time and were found by the accommodating Lullywick. The name of Tukins had lost its charm if it ever had any for the children and the euphonious name of Lullywick took its place. And there they are—as fine a brood, taking one view of it, as man may see. As soon as Roger Boye's estate was reduced to money and Madame Lullywick came into full possession of his hoarded gold, the Bond street mansion was purchased and the life of riot was begun. The iron firm in Garroway street in which Lullywick had a small in-

terest, was succeeded by Theodore Lullywick & Sons—the sons being the Tukins boys, who could read and also could write their names if they were not hurried in the process.

Usually the day was well advanced before there was any sign of life, except by hirelings, in or about Lullywick mansion in Bond street. On the morning after the reception, the members of the family were more dilatory than usual in coming to the breakfast table. Mr. Lullywick was the first to make his appearance, others followed one by one until the table had its complement. Madame Lullywick presided with usual grace and dignity or a little more than usual. It was evident before the meal had occupied much attention that Madame Lullywick's temper was in a snarl. For every fancied inattention on the part of servants, and there was a small army of them, all black and polished off and shiny with good living, she fell into a little passion that brought the color to her high cheeks.

The elder Lullywick appeared to be unmoved and took his coffee in sullen silence unmindful of the sharp if not scornful glances with which Madame Lullywick regarded him. The Misses Lullywick in curl papers and undress nibbled the toast in a spiteful way. Agnes Canton alone appeared as usual, quiet and unaffected. The Lullywick boys were interested in the meal and let nothing come between it and them. When appetite had begun to relax its hold, Jack Lullywick, with his mouth full, started the conversation.

"Deuced fine show las' evenin'! Best s'ciety in the city!"

"I should think so!" ejaculated Madame Lullywick, looking upon Lullywick senior as a cat upon her prey. "I should think so!" The gale was coming and probably

those who were acquainted with its violence, braced themselves and held their breath.

"I should like to know," continued Madame Lullywick, addressing the silent head of the house, "if you are master of your own house! I should like to know if I cannot give a reception without being overrun by impudent and low bred reporters. Must I keep open house to entertain newsboys or any vulgar persons who choose to favor us with their company!"

But Mr. Lullywick did not even raise his eyes. He had learned, probably, that it were wiser to retire within himself when the domestic pot boiled over.

"Why!" exclaimed the impulsive Nettie Lullywick who had a little sense and some idea of justice, "what 'd they do that was so bad? I didn't see why they warn't jest's much gentlemen as the rest o' the company. And," she continued, looking at Agnes, "Agnes, 'peared to like one of them."

"Agnes!" burst out Madame Lullywick, "if you have no sense of what is proper conduct, you may keep your room hereafter!"

"The reporters behaved better'n some others I could mention," said Mollie Lullywick who was always on the other side and eager to say something spiteful. "They didn't get tipsy!" she exclaimed with some vehemence, looking hard at Jack Lullywick.

Madame Lullywick forgot her breakfast and glared at her daughters in speechless wrath. Her anger and perturbation of spirit was not warranted by the fact that here came to the surface. Probably, Madame Lullywick regarded reporters as spies, as men trained to steal behind the scene, to lift the curtain and to explore—that they were longer, keener sighted than other men and could see through many thicknesses. Possibly, if one

feature of the reception had been lacking, Madame Lullywick's rage might not have been aroused.

"B'George, yer can't none on yer guess what happened after them reporter fellers left!" said Sam Lullywick with animation. "Yer don't know what me'n Jack did t'm! Come, now, I'll be hanged if yer can guess!" and he laughed uproariously and his brother joined him. "Didn't we fix'm, Jack! O, my! O, dear! Tell'm, Jack! B'George, best joke o' the season!" Jack Lullywick thus appealed to gave the desired particulars.

"Wal, yer see, soon's them reporter fellers left, we follered'm an' come up to'm to the park. Sam he asked'm an' wanted to know didn't they know 'nough not to be entroodin' where they want wanted or invited, an' the tall feller said as how he was invited, an' jest then Sam hit'm over the ear with his cane an' went fer'm like a good un, an' knocked'm clean inter the street! An', b'George, yer orter see me larrup the other feller!"

"I don't b'lieve a word of it!" exclaimed Nettie Lullywick. "Where'd you get that black mark under yer eye?"

"Why, o'course, that tall feller hit me, but I'll bet he can't see outer one o' hissen this mornin'."

"But, say," piped up Sam Lullywick, earnestly as though he had forgotten something important, "who d'ye 'spose them reporter fellers was a-talkin' with when we come up to'm? Why, the tipsy feller that come to the party drunk's'n Injun, an' he said the reporters was his friends!"

Madame Lullywick dropped her knife and fork with a clatter; her hands trembled; the color left her face. She looked savagely toward the senior Lullywick, who raised his eyes at last under this spur to meet the look with a startled expression in his own face. Madame

Lullywick abruptly left the table followed by her husband. The junior Lullywicks were too dull to take notice. Dull or not, their mother fell into so many moods, some of them violent and beyond all reason, that new freaks of temper or deportment excited no curiosity. Agnes Canton, however, of different calibre, quick, observant, in a quandary as to much that concerned her and looking for light and a clue, saw and wondered.

CHAPTER V.

AGNES CANTON.

Who was Agnes Canton and why was she under the Lullywick roof? Agnes had asked herself these questions again and again, probed here and there and pleaded for light upon past history, but all to no purpose.

From Madame Lullywick, presumably her benefactor, Agnes learned that she was an orphan, destitute and friendless, and that she had been received into the Lullywick family out of pure and noble charity. Of her early history, of the time before Madame Lullywick became interested in her, Madame Lullywick declared that she knew nothing. Agnes had been an inmate of the Lullywick house nearly six years. She was now twenty. She remembered living at a farm house in Melton, a country town, a long distance from the city. How she longed to go back to that quiet place, to that kind and simple folk! How that delightful life rushed in upon her memory at every recollection! Agnes remembered the quaint house and the rustic porch, the fields and the brook, the flock of sheep and kine! Ah, the simplicity, the beauty, the seclusion of such a life! And she remembered how the kind man and his wife, who were like father and mother to her, wept over her and clung to her at parting and that she, too, cried and sobbed and pleaded to be allowed to stay.

That was nearly six years ago, but memory had taken such a hold upon it, recollection was so vivid that it was ever before Agnes as a scene enacted yesterday.

Six years had passed since Madame Lullywick with her hard, relentless face had brought her to a gilded palace, where a long time she was inconsolable—almost distraught.

Agnes had no knowledge of Madame Lullywick's history—had not heard the name till she appeared at the farm house in Melton and dragged her away. In Melton, Agnes attended the village school and when she reached the Lullywick house, her education with Mollie and Nettie Lullywick was resumed under private teachers. She had made good use of her opportunity in Melton; her mind was active and eager. At fourteen when she came to the Lullywick house, Agnes was far in advance of most girls of her age. Mollie and Nettie Lullywick soon lost interest in better education; and there was reason, for they had few mental gifts; and, finding insurmountable difficulties in English except in large print, turned to French, to the dancing class and to the tortured piano.

Agnes, however, accustomed, or at least resigned to her new home, continued her studies with exceeding zeal and courage. At the age of twenty, then, when Agnes Canton appeared on this stage, after six years of persistent and careful study, she was remarkably proficient in knowledge as practical as any found in books, and any knowledge may be practical, more or less, according to the mind that receives it. Agnes' habit of mind led her to probe to the bottom of anything presented to her understanding—to leave no problem unsolved if it were possible of solution. As she became older, the secret of her life appealed to her as a problem unsolved. Again and again she applied to Madame Lullywick for some clue, but was turned away always by the repetition of the story of her friendless place in the world and her

dependence upon present benefactors. And she had accepted the explanation, not because it satisfied the heart's yearning, but because her past history, for the present at least, appeared to be irrevocably lost or locked beyond reach.

But Agnes could not still the promptings of her heart, aye, and of her mind, too, and again she plunged into the problem determined to gain access to some solving factor. The matter had lain dormant a long time, not dismissed, but merely pigeonholed in the mind with a reminding tag ever dangling before her. One day about a month before the "reception," Agnes, in retrospective mood, her mind toying with the recollection of the happy life at Melton, was suddenly inspired again to explore the past to see if any door, cranny or crevice would open to her; a glimpse might be enough, but until she had it she could not be satisfied. Two years or more had passed since she broached the subject to Madame Lullywick.

With the thought came determination and action. Agnes went directly to Madame Lullywick and opened the old controversy, or more properly, perhaps, the old wound, for thus did it appear to be to Madame Lullywick, which she may have imagined, in the long interval of silence, had healed and left not even a scar. Nothing was learned at this interview, but Agnes saw what she had not seen or observed before. Agnes was older now, her mind was clearer, more determined and quicker to make deductions. She saw that her query startled Madame Lullywick, and in her face was an expression, in her eyes a gleam that told Agnes as plainly as words that she was possibly encroaching upon dangerous ground—leading up to something that might recoil upon her. Fraught with danger as it might be, yet the fact,

if it were a fact, only quickened the impulse to know more, to know all.

Madame Lullywick had resources; she could not command herself immediately in sudden surprises, but after the first flush, her will conquered and she became calm as before. She tried to be gracious, recited the old story and appeared to be grieved that it was not accepted as final. Still, cunning and full of art as she was, she could not conceal the fact that Agnes' quiet persistence stirred her.

Agnes returned to her room and began to review what had passed between her and Madame Lullywick. She could not still the voice that bade her push on till she found something; her soul was fired with zeal afresh. She began to reason, to weigh and to consider. Madame Lullywick spurned the poor, drove them from her door like vermin, and had no interest in the unfortunate, and apparently not a thought beyond herself and her own. Why should this woman, slave of fashion and all its follies, seek out a poor friendless orphan in far away Melton and take her to her own home—tear her away as though she had some authority over her? How did Madame Lullywick know that in Melton was an orphan, by no means friendless, for the Melton friends were kinder than any she had known since, suited to her charity needs? Madame Lullywick must have had some knowledge of her before she appeared in Melton. What was it?

Although while in the Lullywick house Agnes had met with kindness, yet it was a negative kindness—really neither kindness nor unkindness. When she entered the house, she was told to call Madame Lullywick "aunt" as she had addressed the kind friends in Melton as "uncle" and "aunt," but she could never yield to it; the word choked her and stifled her, and the word "madame"

must act as substitute. While Agnes was grateful for her education, and expressed often her gratitude, thankful, also, for clothing, if it had been scant, and for food, of which there was no lack, yet the time had come to cast off these charities, be independent and earn her own bread. The gilt and glitter, the aimless lives of the members of the Lullywick family, the shallowness and heartlessness of it all was repulsive and depressing. A sense of something like shame overwhelmed Agnes sometimes as she began to see and to appreciate fully the character of those on whom she had depended and to whom she was and must ever be under obligation.

Often when this sense of loneliness, dependence, disheartened her, the resolution came to go forth to work, to beg even, if need be, to escape what was becoming more and more intolerable. But where could she go? To whom could she apply? Agnes had few acquaintances, for she did not visit with the Lullywicks and was glad that she was spared and not missed from such company —only occasionally had she courage enough to mingle with the guests who found welcome in the house. Her books and studies had been her only friends and companions and were enough; and so interested in them had she been that little thought had been given to the world or what was in it for her. But now Agnes awoke to the fact that there was a life to live, that its duties must be met, that she was endowed with good health and a strong body, and that she was able to fight her own battles and fight them she would.

The dawdling habits of the Lullywick family had little influence upon Agnes' mind and life; while it depressed, she could rise above it or keep it at a distance. It was not a social family; the members came together rarely except at breakfast and at late dinner; there was no so-

cial gathering except when the toady and the sycophant came in full dress—no fireside lingering or domestic conviviality—and no home cheerfulness, little pleasures, or mutual interest and exchange of sympathy.

While Agnes appeared to be one of the family, yet often she was treated with such coldness and indifference that the thought came that she was only a guest, an unwelcome guest, whom the host and hostess entertained because they must. Menial labor had never been required of her, but she cared for her own room, made her own clothing, and voluntarily helped in the kitchen to practice with and to take lessons of the housekeeper. Up to this time, Agnes had mingled little with the Lullywick guests, but now when courses of study were completed, although diligent study was not at an end, and as the outside world began to have interest, she went occasionally to the drawing room. In this way a few acquaintances were made, and when her friends came again they inquired for Agnes if she was not present. This simple fact was one of the causes that led to a change of conduct on the part of Madame Lullywick toward Agnes.

Agnes was a good conversationalist, quick and ready in speech, bright and cheery, and the rich mellow voice added charm. Her conversation showed the wealth of her mind, and Madame Lullywick's guests listened with pleasure and applauded. Not many of her guests were apparently interested in anything intellectual, but the night lamp attracts often and destroys useful insects. On the other hand, the Misses Lullywick had not advanced a jot; their educational possession was little more than when they ran at large in the factory village or worked in the mill; a little gossip in clipped English; a little silly, giggling talk about nothing; a little chatter about

dress and fashion, the length of skirts and the height of bonnets, was all they could master and be sure of it. They wore more rings on fingers, more jewels hung from ear lobes than when they worked in the mill, but otherwise there was little change. Certainly, no more jewels were hung in the mind.

Madame Lullywick was quick to see the contrast between Agnes and her daughters, and, naturally, considering what kind a woman she was, was displeased that the poor orphan whom she had taken to her house should shine before her guests to the disadvantage of her own children. Hence, Madame Lullywick, fully realizing this, presented excuses, ready made, for Agnes if her guests requested her presence.

Certainly a barrier between Madame Lullywick and her protege was taking shape and building itself up—the natural result of the conflict, or the mere social contact of a pure soul with its exact opposite. Agnes realized it, and believed that the time was near when she must be her own and only master. But before she left that house another attempt must be made to lift the veil that hid past history.

A few months before this time, that is, the time of the reception, Agnes met Mrs. Apton at one of Madame Lullywick's teas and was attracted by her motherly face, apparent kindness of heart and her gentle and refined manner. Mrs. Apton also appeared to be drawn to Agnes and urged her to call at her house. Mrs. Apton's first visit to the Lullywick house was also the last. Thoughtful, worthy persons may be caught in a trap like others, but one twitch of the snare, one grip of the noose is enough; when they escape they keep beyond range forever after. Agnes was received so cordially by Mrs. Apton that she could not doubt the sincerity of her new

friend. This acquaintance, the first of its kind, brought more sunshine into her life. O, what healing in kind words, sympathy and in a caress!

Since leaving the Bartleys, the kind "uncle" and "aunt" in Melton, no one had been lovingly kind. When Agnes began to visit Mrs. Apton, a new life appeared to stretch before her. Really, there was something to live for after all. At the first visit, Agnes remembered that Mrs. Apton embraced her, kissed her, bringing the tears of gratitude to her eyes, so free had been her life from such offerings of friendship. That was the first touch of love that had reached her heart since her girlhood, and it helped, O, so much, to smooth the path that was often rough and steep.

For several months, Agnes had been a constant visitor at Mrs. Apton's house, and her acquaintance with Mrs. Apton had ripened into friendship and love, and it was through the kindness and help of Mrs. Apton that she hoped to come in contact with the world and be independent. As there had been no restraint upon her movements, and as there had been no familiar exchange of confidence between Madame Lullywick and herself, Agnes had said nothing to her about her visits to Mrs. Apton. There was no thought of concealment; it did not occur to Agnes that Madame Lullywick would be interested in it.

Returning from Mrs. Apton's house one day, Agnes found Madame Lullywick in the hall evidently waiting for her. She saw that Madame Lullywick was disturbed and that an outburst was coming. At her imperious bidding, Agnes followed her to the sewing room, and then the woman, possessed of a demon, turned upon her.

"You may think you can deceive me, but you are mistaken! What are you plotting, looking so dark and

sour all the time? What are you doing so much with that Apton woman! Have I not given you all you ever had? Is this the return you make for what I've done for you? Is this the way you show the gratitude you talk about? That Apton woman has treated me with contempt, refused my invitations and snubbed me again and again, and you are gadding around and conniving with her! And," she continued, growing louder and more demonstrative, "I forbid you ever entering her house again! If you do, you have no place here and may leave instantly," and as usual when her temper was victor, she turned to leave the room. But Agnes, now aroused and indignant, barred the way.

"Madame Lullywick, you must listen to me! I have been to Mrs. Apton's house because she invited me and was kind to me. I never thought that you would object or care anything about it. I conceal nothing; there is nothing to conceal, and as to conniving, you mistake. I do not know what you mean. Never has a word against you or about you come from Mrs. Apton in my presence. And, now," continued Agnes, believing the time for final reckoning had come, "what is the meaning of this passionate outbreak. This is not directed against Mrs. Apton, but against me? How did you know that I have been to Mrs. Apton's? Do you watch me? If you do, why? What have I done to thus arouse your enmity? I can think of nothing! I am guiltless of any intention to offend you. My conscience is free!

"Madame Lullywick," said Agnes, approaching a step nearer and speaking with intense earnestness, "you cannot deceive me! There is something about me, my past history—something you know—I am sure of it—that is in some way the cause of your harshness and violence. What is it? Am I to live with this cloud always hang-

ing over me? Madame Lullywick, will you tell me who I am? Will you tell me why you chose me as the orphan whom you wished to befriend? How did you know that I or the one you wanted was in Melton? How did you find me? You must have known something about me before that time. What was it? Why will you not tell me? Have I not a right to know?"

Madame Lullywick was silent, and she quailed before the close scrutiny of this determined woman. Her hands trembled, her face paled a little and she bit her lips fiercely, struggling with self and trying to gain control. She answered calmly, comparatively, with a slight tremor in the voice:

"I know nothing about you more than I've told you. Why do you keep asking? What wonderful history," she added with a sneer, "do you suppose is connected with your life?"

"Wonderful or not," exclaimed Agnes vehemently, "there is a history and you know it. There is something about me you know, and for some reason will not tell. Now my mind is made up! You tell me if I go into Mrs. Apton's house again, I must leave this house. I decide now, Madame Lullywick! I shall go immediately to Mrs. Apton! I leave this house now, and I go as I am! I will not take a thing from my room. You gave me all, and all is yours! I am grateful and I have tried to express it and to show it. But you can do no more; I must do for myself! Better to beg than to be a hated and despised recipient of charity! Again I thank you, and I shall never be less grateful! Let us part in peace!" and Agnes held out her hand.

Evidently Madame Lullywick was surprised and unprepared for such an issue; and in her face and eyes there

was more than surprise—a startled look that did not escape Agnes.

"Agnes, you shall not go," she exclaimed vehemently but not angrily. "What I've done I thought was for your good. If you set so much by your visits to Mrs. Apton, you may continue them. Perhaps I may be mistaken about her. Let the matter drop and say nothing to Mrs. Apton or to anyone else of what has passed between us. Go to your room and think no more about it."

Madame Lullywick swept out of the room and Agnes, surprised by this unexpected result, disturbed, more than ever in doubt by this sudden change and easy compliance, was undecided and stood for a moment trying to collect her thoughts. She did not play with words when she said that she was going. She had said it, and she meant it; the time had come; she wanted to go, and go she would, now. Agnes opened the door to pass out, and in the threshold met Madame Lullywick, who entered and closed the door. The devil in the woman had returned to life and activity, and was in full command. Her fierce eyes flashed and shot forth malignant hatred and scorn, and through it all appeared an indescribable expression, cunning, crafty, low, in her face now flaming with passion.

"And suppose I do know something about you," she almost screamed, "and suppose I choose to keep it to myself that you may not be disgraced by it, you minx! Suppose there's something about your birth, you—"

She did not finish the sentence, and with a look and a gesture intended to express much, the angry woman, like a snarling tigress unwillingly leaving her prey, disappeared again, closing the door with a crash.

Agnes sprang back when Madame Lullywick reentered the room—when she saw how fierce was the pas-

sion that controlled her; and as she advanced a step at every sentence as though she wished to spring upon and rend her, Agnes shrunk from her and feared for her life. In all the stormy scenes witnessed in that house, Madame Lullywick never appeared so far removed from reason and sobriety as then.

Stunned by this awful disclosure about her birth, groping, feeling her way up the broad stairway, Agnes found her room, and, throwing herself upon the bed, let the storm within her breast rage and the torrent of tears have free course. Till far into the night she struggled with this new feature of her life as one might with a vampire—hurling it from her, casting it down only to see it rise again and fasten its hold upon her. But on the heels of the storm, however violent, follows the calm and the sun with its gentle, soothing antidote. A strong woman with Agnes' natural and acquired gifts, at the threshold of life and womanhood cannot be crushed by anything of which her own soul is guiltless. After the storm passed and the fountain of her tears was dry, she began to reason and to take a sensible view of what had overtaken her. If there was a stain upon her birth, then it must be met and accepted, and tears availed nothing.

After all, if all were true, had not Madame Lullywick been or tried to be her benefactor, in keeping from her what might cloud her life to the end! After all—all her querying and suspicion—she had persisted in the overthrow of herself. Ah, but if true, why could not Madame Lullywick tell her kindly? Why should the knowledge of it or the recollection of it drive to fury unless—unless—Oh! Oh!—unless it was a personal recollection! Merciful God, was it possible that some link of infamy connected her with that house! The thought was stifling, suffocating and filled her soul with loathing.

In spite of her generous spirit, in spite of the fact that she was indebted to Madame Lullywick, a feeling of distrust, mingled with fear and dread, took possession of her. The time had come to fly from what was like a rankling thorn in the flesh. But as Agnes grew calmer a ray of cheer struggled into her mind as light into a dark room through closed shutters. She began to doubt. Madame Lullywick told her that she knew nothing about her past history and left the room; then she rushes back and flings the terrible fact, if fact it be, as though it were an afterthought—as though it might be a ruse to stop further inquiry. But one thing was certain. Instant departure was stayed by the turn of events, but much longer stay in that house was impossible.

The next day Madame Lullywick was more gracious than usual, and almost kind. But Agnes discovered immediately that Madame Lullywick regarded her with suspicion. The barrier between them was becoming an insurmountable wall of partition. In Madame Lullywick's comparative kindness, in her side glances, in her watchful scrutiny, was something Agnes felt intuitively that boded no good for her. But before the cat jumped, the bird might fly.

CHAPTER VI.

STANLEY BRUCE ENCOUNTERS MADAME LULLYWICK.

The next day after the Lullywick reception, Stanley Bruce awoke to the fact that a new interest had come into his life. The sun had more delight in its brightness; the dingy street into which he looked from the window of his room was more attractive than he ever thought it could be; the voice of the hawker rising on the cry, "Good cookin' an' eatin' apples," that had disturbed his morning quiet until he thought of going out and taking him by the collar, now had less jar and more melody in it; a new factor in prosaic life and routine was now foremost and the thought of it filled his soul and thrilled him, and gave new impulse to glowing, eager hope and prompted him to look into the future through a wide and enchanting vista.

As Bruce recalled his conversation with Miss Canton, who formed the oasis in the desert of undress and brass at the Lullywick reception, a feeling of distrust in his own discretion came to him like a shock from an electric battery. In that brief time he had laid before Miss Canton a summary of the history of his life—of his father, mother, brother and sisters. Of all he had spoken with that affectionate enthusiasm that characterized him in any mention of those dear to him. How could he do it? What possessed him to thus confide in a stranger. Bruce remembered with a thrill that made him jump that Miss Canton had committed to him many details of her life, although giving no clue to the fact that she was a member

of the Lullywick household, which to Bruce in his present state of mind was wrong—must be—and unaccountable till more light came to reveal.

Bruce reproached himself gently for his boyish simplicity and chatter about himself; and while the first thought of it depressed him, yet as he became accustomed to it, the review of all that passed between them made his heart buoyant. He remembered that when he looked into her blue eyes he saw and felt what he had never seen or felt before; he knew it; something flashed through his soul that had never come near him before. While in college, during vacation, Bruce had traveled throughout his own and other countries, for his father had made his education very liberal, and he had access, at home, to the most refined and intelligent society; nowhere had he fallen under the spell of womanly grace and beauty—nowhere had he come face to face with any problem of love.

In his egotism, he wondered if Miss Canton's response to his confiding history of himself, in speaking of her own thoughts and purposes, was prompted by anything she saw in him—was it akin to what he recognized in her? He recalled that her eyes met his and never flinched—not with boldness and conventional staring, but, as he imagined, with kindred sympathy and interest; and he remembered, also, and his face burned at the thought, that when he bade Miss Canton good-night, and she extended her hand, he held it a moment between both hands, that his left hand—how could he do it?—had closed over it unconsciously. But quickly came the reassuring thought that there was no appearance of protest on her part, not even recognition of it—merely unconscious, automatic on her part as well as his.

This meeting and quick response of two souls is not

conventional, but it is natural. There was no background to Bruce's character where his thoughts and sentiments were rehearsed and fitly worded for the public ear. Whatever appealed to his admiration and sense of worth and beauty, had immediate outspoken and emphatic approval; he had no set phrase or reserve stock of fine words to serve any occasion; in Bruce was the personification of candor, good, broad sense and honesty, too blunt, perhaps, to please word-weighers and time-servers, but steadfast and true to the core. Rigidly, yet sensibly brought up, Bruce had come to manhood with exalted ideas of life and its responsibilities, and no influence could swerve him a jot from the highest purpose and endeavor. Miss Canton's characteristics were simply counterparts of those of Bruce—fearless in the right, but not bold, pure as the unflecked snow, honest, broad-minded and endowed with rare good sense.

No cause for wonder, then, that two such souls coming in contact should intuitively, almost, yield to each other and spontaneously, in words or otherwise, declare their respect, aye, their love for each other. What maudlin sentiment is abroad and wandering up and down in regard to the social relation of good men and women? A man, sixty years of age, with the stamp of respectability and worth upon him, was traveling in a crowded car. In the seat with him was a woman apparently thirty years of age—at all events old enough to have a little sense if she ever intended to come into possession of that commodity. They rode in silence a hundred miles. When the woman laid down her book and began to look at the landscape, the man volunteered a harmless remark about the weather, which was not good and deserved comment. Then the woman turned upon him with scorn and anger in her face, and, her eyes flashing, gathered

up her bundles and baggage, and, without a word, swept into the aisle where she stood until an accommodating gentleman gave her his seat. She had not been formally introduced, and, destitute of sense, accepted the friendly offering of a gentleman as an insult.

To Bruce was now presented the problem of reaching Miss Canton, and reach her in some way he would if it were within human possibility. The winged god had sent home his shaft to Bruce's heart; he knew it, and the world might know it; it was something not to shrink from, but to press on to and to be proud of.

Bruce kept no secrets from his friend Paige, and consulted him immediately. In matters of this kind, Paige was a little more determined or confident than Bruce. A straightforward course was his always, but, assured that it was clean-cut and above board, nothing could turn him.

"Why not call on Miss Canton?" suggested Paige. "Walk right into the Lullywick mansion and demand to see Miss Canton!"

"Can you not see that is impossible under the circumstances—impossible at present, at least! Proper to make a party call on Madame Lullywick if we'd been bona fide guests and had not been treated with scorn. I cannot call on Miss Canton because I was not her guest! See what a snarl I'm in! Strictly, there could be no greater breach of etiquette than to call on a guest of the hostess (as Miss Canton may be) and ignore the hostess."

"Fudge! Snarl or no snarl, don't let fine points of etiquette stand in your way! I know that you believe in etiquette, even the whittled points of it, if founded on sense, but what do the Lullywicks know or care about etiquette?"

"But if I am to have access to that house I must con-

ciliate the Lullywicks, Madame Lullywick, at least. If they have no manners, that's no reason why I should forget mine. If I am to see Miss Canton, I must court the favor of Madame Lullywick."

"You may court with all your best manners, but you'll never win. If I am a judge, there's a woman you cannot conciliate. She's a fighter. Every look, every motion, shows it. She has a powerful will, but not reason and sense enough to balance; she treated us with contempt; her mind in regard to us is made up, fixed and immovable. Nothing can atone for the insult we offered her in attending her reception. Stanley Bruce, make up your mind to be trampled on if you carry the campaign into her company. Come! I'll help you! Mark out the course and I'll pitch in anywhere. Nothing would please me more than to outwit her! Two heads ought to be better than one, if one is Madame Lullywick's. The way she looked at us across that drawing room, the way her eyes followed us, makes my blood run cooler. Decide on action, sir, immediately, and give me orders!"

Easy to decide on action, but Bruce found it difficult to make use of the decision. Not only must he preserve his own self-respect, but also must he be cautious that he did not compromise Miss Canton by any hasty or ill-judged action. Three days later as Bruce went through the park, his pulse started into a quickstep as he recognized Miss Canton approaching. The rain was beginning to fall and people were hurrying to shelter. Despite the falling rain, Miss Canton held out her hand with her usual frankness, and under Bruce's umbrella again they were looking into each other's eyes, finding in each what each looked for and admired. Delightful opportunity! Under the umbrella, she leaning on his arm, like fast friends long separated, they walked slowly toward the

Lullywick mansion, unmindful of the rain—of everything except themselves. In height Miss Canton stood a little above Bruce's shoulder, and as she held his arm and looked up at him and he down upon her, to Bruce, and perhaps to Miss Canton, the muddy street was love's lane strewn with flowers and the swish of the drenched branches of the park trees only sweet accompaniment.

If there be merit in contrast, then here was a picture—a woman with light brown hair, blue eyes and a fresh, rosy complexion, and the man with black hair and mustache and dark complexion. As they approached the Lullywick house, Bruce saw at the window the faces of two giggling Lullywick girls. Miss Canton saw them, too, and a deeper flush overspread her cheeks, but there was a slight toss of the head, an independent poise of it that was equivalent to, "There's nothing to be ashamed of! I don't care who knows!"

Bruce was in transports, and asked if he might call. Miss Canton looked at him almost wonderingly, as she said, "Certainly!" Stanley Bruce now walked on stilts with his head in the clouds. Already had he found much in life to enjoy and to be thankful for, for he dwelt on the bright side of experience and hard work, but now—now the world had become a garden with flowers and greater beauty at every turn in the way.

On the following evening Bruce was ushered into the great drawing room of the Lullywick house, shaking in his boots and wondering if he might be allowed to escape with his life if the mistress of the house found him loitering there. But fortunately the Lullywicks were on duty elsewhere. In the same nook, in the clutter of bric-a-brac, where he first met Miss Canton, he sat in the charming presence and forgot all else. He appreciated the depth and breadth of her mind; she had read not

merely for entertainment, but also for culture. Of the great questions of the day, in art, literature and education, Miss Canton had well-grounded, matter-of-fact ideas, and discussed them with astonishing readiness and clearness. As he watched the lights and shadows in her countenance, he was glad to come to the conclusion that she was not pretty, for a pretty face was not always a recommendation. Miss Canton's face was too strong, too intellectual, to be pretty, but when he saw it under fire—under the fire of her thoughts and the flash of eye that came to emphasize—he thought he had never seen a face more beautiful. Too quickly the time passed. If he had walked on stilts before, his feet had wings now as he went through the park and the streets on his way to his boarding house.

Bruce had duties and obligations to discharge in the interest of the "Morning Waker," and, hence, not many evenings were open to his own entertainment. But in a few days Bruce knocked again at the door of the Lullywick mansion and was admitted as before by a ponderous negro in a dress suit. He placed his card on the silver receiver, presented by the footman, and waited in the drawing room. Hearing the rustle of a dress and a quick, impatient footfall, Bruce sprang up and came face to face with Madame Lullywick. She regarded him a moment with scorn, the color on her high cheeks deepening. At last, tossing her head, she asked, loftily:

"What is your business, sir?"

"I called to see Miss Canton."

"What is your business with Miss Canton?" she asked, making a mock courtesy, "if I may be so bold as to inquire?"

"Business? I-I came to call on Miss Canton! Is Miss Canton in?"

"In or out does not concern you, sir! You cannot see Miss Canton."

Bruce was aroused, but there was no danger of his losing his head or temper; he had himself in full command and realized that he was in another's house and also that he had a devil to deal with. What the woman said hurt not so much as the way she said it.

"Is Miss Canton in?" asked Bruce sharply. "Has she received my card?"

"No! And will not receive it! I forbid her receiving cards or visits from you! You will take your departure immediately, if you please," she added with another mock courtesy—an insolent twist of the body that made Bruce hot. Her face burned and her eyes—but there are no words to describe them. It were useless for a sane man to contend with a worse than a termagant, but Bruce was no coward.

"I beg to inform you, madame, that I claim to be a gentleman and expect to be treated as such even in your house."

"If you are a gentleman, you will leave this house immediately—without another word!"

Parley was useless and Bruce was glad to escape, but if Madame Lullywick supposed that she had won for all time, she was in error. Nothing drives some men on so fast as opposition. Bruce was furious as he strode through the park. Never before had such insult been thrown at him. What was the meaning of it? Was it all explained by the fact that he had been an unwelcome guest? No! There must be something more. And there was, although Bruce knew it not. Ah, it was a new experience to be ordered out of a house like a straggling tramp, and his blood was on fire at the recollection.

Ha, spurned like a beggar! He, Stanley Bruce, son of an honest Quaker, walked over and spat upon!

Paige feared that Bruce had parted with all his senses when he appeared at Paige's desk in the "Open Eye" office. He felt the disgrace of the repulse almost as much as Bruce himself, but no remedy appeared at present; they must bide their time. It were useless to write to Miss Canton, even if that were proper; probably no letter would reach her. Bruce must wait.

Nearly a week after the encounter with Madame Lullywick, Bruce met Miss Canton in the public library. His eagerness to see her was responded to apparently by an equal inclination on her part. Miss Canton was ready to leave the library and Bruce proposed a carriage drive. She assented gladly and soon they were riding toward the suburbs. Bruce was thinking of his dismissal by Madame Lullywick, but as his companion became so much interested in the ride he had not the heart to introduce a subject to depress them both.

Miss Canton became so enthusiastic over what came to view in this picturesque part of the suburbs that it was evident that this ride afforded a new pleasure. Why had this talented, this beautiful woman been kept in seclusion—kept somewhere out of the range of the ordinary pleasures, for her delight and the unconscious revelation of words showed that thus far in her life her path had been narrow and hedged in.

Returning to the city, a dilemma arose in Bruce's mind. He must leave Miss Canton at the Lullywick mansion and thus disclose to watchful eyes what might result to the disadvantage of Miss Canton. For himself, he cared not how many questioning eyes were upon him. But if he recounted what took place between Madame Lullywick and himself, naturally Miss Canton would be

led into expression of sympathy. There was the pinch; it was a nice distinction, but Bruce was capable of it. If she expressed regret, and the circumstances demanded it, would it not be an admission of her interest in him, and had he a right in this short acquaintance to bring her to such a confession, even though involuntary on her part? But the knot was cut easily. Miss Canton asked to be left at a downtown store and another encounter, perhaps, with Madame Lullywick was avoided.

Several days later, Paige and Bruce were delegated to report for their respective papers, the high and low quavering at a private and most select recital in which the leaders of the top-notch aristocracy had a directing hand. When the audience was on the tiptoe of expectation and a player of local fame, with his hair bristling like a hearth broom, not from fright, but from the habit of growth, aided by careful culture, came forth to make noise and overture—at this moment, just the time for royalty or its next of kin to appear and make a flutter—Madame Lullywick and her daughters swept in like a queen out for an airing after her first coronation, resplendent in costly and high-colored fabrics and glittering gems. The audience faced the entrance and the view was clear to full inspection.

Ah, with what grace, hauteur and condescension did Madame Lullywick and her daughters rustle grandly (like stiff canvas on a tailor's goose) into their places in the front row of patrons—into the seats vacated by humbler guests, who scurried out of them as though they had stolen them and had been caught in the act. A part of the audience looked on passively, a part smiled and whispered low, and a part, "quite considerable," according to the fulsome speech of the Rev. Lacroix Tallyho,

scowled, wrinkled its forehead and thrust out its under lip.

In this flurry Bruce whispered to Paige, "I'm off to Bond street! The coast is clear! I'll call at your office by 10 and get an account of the recital! Wait for me!"

Before the first note sounded, perhaps waiting for Madame Lullywick to bring into easy poise and mount on her nose the gold rimmed spy glass with a jeweled handle, Bruce was out and sprinting toward Bond street. The same stout negro admitted him and received his card. The drawing room was dark and, uninvited to enter, Bruce stood in the hall. He noticed that the negro received the card with a jerk and scowled, and, what was more insolent, stopped to read the card, supposing he could read, and to look on the back of it; he noticed also that after turning and staring at him at the door through which he disappeared, the negro apparently went into the lower or scullery part of the house, for he could follow his heavy step. But possibly at that moment Miss Canton might be employed in some domestic duty.

Presently appeared the two Lullywick boys, followed closely by the burly negro. The elder held Bruce's card, and, approaching within a foot of Bruce, tore the card into a dozen pieces and threw them into Bruce's face. The Lullywicks were staggering under a heavy load of intoxicants; no gentleman quarrels or even bandies words with a drunken man, if he may escape; but no man with an atom of manhood, in a corner, hemmed in, will tender the other cheek and quietly submit to a pummeling; if there be such a man, then pummeling is good for him—the best medicine to cure him.

During the card tearing the negro moved behind Bruce and stood with his hand on the door knob. Bruce

said nothing nor moved a muscle when the pieces of cardboard tingled in his face; he did not intend to wrestle with filth unless he was forced. One of the Lullywicks, the elder, the braver, that is, the greater ruffian, with a lurch and a volley of oaths, went to the hall rack and drew forth a heavy stick. Bruce backed slowly toward the door and reached for the knob, but the negro held it, also the spring latch, and he grinned, the rascal. Ha, he was in league with the two pirates and they intended in their insanity from drink to punish him roundly. Only oaths and foul epithets had come from the lips of the Lullywicks; they were incapable in their present maudlin state of connected speech. The elder staggered up in drunken fury and swung his stick to bring down on Bruce, but Bruce, familiar with foils and the gloves, threw up his arm, and the heavy cane fell across the negro's nose, who stood within a foot of the place where Bruce was still holding the door.

The negro fell in a lump, and making a great outcry, after the manner of those who see death staring at them when they run upon or sit down upon a pin. The door released, Bruce lost no time to escape and another Lullywick reception had left its mark—on Bruce's mind and on a prominent feature of the portly footman. Depressing and discouraging as this was, Bruce laughed as he hastened back to the recital, for there was time to see or hear the end of it; and, moreover, there was another opportunity to feast his eyes on representative members of the Lullywick family, now taking up much room in his mind and daily occupying a larger space; he would know them better if the Lord willed, and the more they repulsed him, the more intimate might be their acquaintance in the end.

Bruce was now aroused, body and soul; some clue

must be wrung out of something—some light upon the cause of this dark enmity of the Lullywicks toward him; it was too bitter, too revengeful, too low and brutal to be prompted by anything that had passed between them. But clues and information, good or bad, came not in Bruce's way. He loitered and waited in the public library and wandered in the park for a glimpse of Miss Canton, but in vain. He walked past the Lullywick house by day and in the night and shook his clenched hand (in his pocket) as he looked up at the frigid pile of stone and brick in which was what was becoming dearer to him than his own life and where, also, without adequate cause as he could see, he had come under the lash of brutal insolence for the first time in his life.

But the plot thickens or takes shape elsewhere; the leaven of discovery is working in the loaf of infamy, and Agnes Canton and Stanley Bruce, or their interwoven history, must wait till contributory and coincident events come abreast.

CHAPTER VII.

OURTOWN.

Ourtown lies on the eastern shore hard by the sea. Seaward a long, smooth beach skirts the town north by east and south by west. Landward, woodland, upland and meadow, picturesquely intermingled, fill the interval between it and adjacent boroughs.

The older inhabitants, descendants of the original settlers, related to the passengers on the Mayflower, are both farmers and fishers. When the land fails, they mend their fortunes at sea; when the sea pays scant tribute, they return to the land; and when both are inhospitable, they wait—wait on short stemmed pipes and the summer boarder, keeping a sharp weather eye on the political pot and those interested seaward with long purses who keep the fire burning. Thus with little fishing and often less farming and with much waiting, smoking and watching, they eke out a subsistence that satisfies all their wants.

When the tired city folks come to idle away the summer months, Ourtown arouses itself, shakes off its lethargy and continues a laborious activity as long as the guests remain or their money does not run short. But after their departure Ourtown falls asleep and is not really awake again till the next season. Even the dogs, worn out in correcting city small fry, dozing in the sun, open only one eye as the stranger passes. The town pump, also, partakes of the general disinclination to work and is continually "running off," and cannot be induced

to exert itself unless a gallon of that commodity in which it is supposed to deal is poured down its throat; and thus it happens that the arm of this slothful pump is in the air always, apparently, appealing in behalf of its own quenchless thirst.

Before the mania of collecting old furniture ran riot in the land and disturbed the people, many of Ourtown's houses contained rare pieces of mahogany, brass and plate, not to mention tall clocks that could tell not only the time of day, the goings and comings of the sun and moon, but also tell and do many things beyond the ken and kink of clocks, tall or short, constructed in this fast and furious age by men of no ingenuity and only brains for pocket-stuffing—before this rage began, Ourtown was rich in things old and useful, but the summer boarder, peering into attics, best rooms and corner cupboards, discovered these relics and, with tears in his eyes, and wiping vigorously, declared that they—the clock, clawed leg bureau and whatnot—were the counterparts of those belonging to ancestors whose memory was held sacred.

And, further, on the plea of wishing to perpetuate the memory of the forerunners aforesaid, bought them for a song. If the good people of Ourtown had visited a city store in the fall of the year after the roundup of the antique, they might have seen their cherished heirlooms, sold for a pittance to perpetuate somebody's memory, knocked down to the highest bidder at fabulous prices.

But while Ourtown, like many persons, was drowsy in the winter season, with weighted eyelids and indifferent to the future if the present did not annoy, yet it was an enlightened and not quite a stationary part of the Commonwealth. It boasted, and there was cause, of its good works, its educational facilities and its broad and

catholic spirit of emancipation from everything that interfered with freedom of thought, expression and belief. The high school was a tower of strength and a monument to the town's forethought and liberality.

Arthur Wainworth, classmate of Ralph Markman Paige and Stanley Bruce, was principal of the high school and the head and front of Ourtown's educational system by virtue of his position, and lately inducted into office—about the time his friends in the city became apprentices in the school of journalism. Already, Wainworth, having regular hours of labor, "off time" and a regular weekly holiday, had visited the reporters, but the plethora of news or the thumb screw of discipline that demanded instant harvest and culling for the benefit of the impatient reader, prevented a return of compliment and exchange of hospitality.

But now, on this "glorious morning" as the rising sun was regilding the church weather cocks and the city for the most part slumbered, Paige and Bruce, at last unshackled and released from the domination of the system of news-gathering, were on their way to Ourtown to hobnob with Arthur Wainworth, to stretch their legs afield, to angle, perhaps, and to "drink in" the unpolluted air of heaven, on free tap in Ourtown as in no other by-end of earth—on the authority of the town crier, in his eighty-seventh year, whose voice, aye, and his physique did not belie him. One peculiarity of Ourtown deserves mention before any further progress in its territory be made. From east to west, north to south, there was not a hill, brook, hamlet, cluster of houses, road, corner, valley, forest, glade, swamp, pond, lane or path without a name; even trees of sturdy growth standing alone in pastures and by traveled ways were known by name.

Wainworth met the reporters at the station, the most

stirring place in town except the postoffice, and conducted them to his boarding house, the village hostelry on "Broadway"—an eight rod way, laid out in 1737—and Shoe Peg lane, running along one side of it into the country. After breakfast, the trio went forth in search of the picturesque and recreation—to wander, not by the surf charged shore, for to the sea in all its moods they were not strangers, but in quiet woods and meads, by bosky dells, by limpid brooks and "grateful shades." When in their wanderings, they came to the shore of a wide spreading pond, piscatorial ambition must be satisfied. When the sun was in the zenith the united efforts of the three anglers had produced a "fair string of fish," and now to dinner at some farm house—to some hospitable and indulgent housewife who would add fish fry to more substantial dinner fabric.

The way from the pond led up a steep incline to the crowning summit of the wooded hills. Reaching this elevation and a cleared space that commanded a view of the western interval and the hills beyond, the fishermen paused "to view the landscape o'er," to woo the cooling breeze to heated brow and to rest on cushions of pine needles. Back of them against the dark frowning forest was an impenetrable wall of tangled brush, trees and creeping vines.

Ready to resume the quest of dinner, a shout was heard deep in the silent woods. Peering through the wall of brush and vine, they looked into a long vista, into the heart of the forest—the cart path or abandoned road way—the continuation of the path that led from the pond; here it turned abruptly to the east and ran through to the great highway on the other side. As they looked through this leafy opening, they saw a man approaching apparently running at full speed.

As he comes nearer, they see that he is without shoes or foot covering of any kind and that he has no coat or hat; he is an old man, evidently, and his long white beard and hair flow behind as he runs; he looks behind and is apparently trying to escape. Yes, there they come, his pursuers, three men—coming on at a quick pace and fast closing the gap between. The man, seeing that his pursuers are gaining upon him, increases effort; but in vain. When within fifty feet of Wainworth and the reporters, the old man, finding escape impossible, for his pursuers are upon him, wrings his hands, looks imploringly around and sinks to the earth with a groan, the tears coursing down his thin cheeks. Two of the ruffians (for such they appear to be) seize him roughly by the shoulder, lift him to his feet, and with one on each side and the other behind, retrace their steps.

As the three men came into nearer view, Paige and Bruce stared at each other in amazement—more than amazement on the part of Bruce, as though some startling fact had come and made revelation. With a strange glitter in his eyes, his hands clenched, Bruce sprang forward as the two men seized the old man and brought him up with a jerk. Wainworth caught his arm and Paige laid his hand upon his shoulder to restrain him, and they discovered that he was trembling like a leaf.

"Impetuous man!" exclaimed Wainworth. "What would you do? That's no affair of ours! If there be anything wrong here, first, it don't concern us, and, second, we're not equal to the three swarthy rascals, if such they be, and they certainly look it!"

Bruce only glared at him and then at Paige, visibly, unaccountably affected. "But we might follow——" he almost gasped.

"And suffer insult and broken heads for interfering or

even looking on. Probably an insane man in charge of keepers. It is not new to find lunatics under the care of men as evil looking as these! Come to dinner, if fortunately we may find one, and be thankful that we have kept our fingers out of that bad pie and are not creeping to shelter in need of a surgeon."

A change, so sudden, remarkable, had come over Bruce that Paige and Wainworth could only stare and wonder. Paige had seen or recognized more than Wainworth, but not enough to account for this strange demeanor on the part of Bruce. What could Bruce have seen to so disturb the mind and to so rack the body, for he was still tremulous and gazing almost vacantly before him, like a man deep in some mental process.

"Come! Come! Stanley," exclaimed Wainworth. "Come out of your trance! Wake up! What, O, what have you seen that stirs you so? How could this interest you so much—make your breath hard and make you shake—and take such hold upon you?"

"To dinner, then," said Bruce, as they began to descend the slope, the strange light still in his eyes. "Sure as the light of day, I've seen something—something more than you saw—that is, something came to me from seeing before. I cannot mistake. A vision? Yes, a vision—a vision of the brightness of heaven and the blackness of hell."

So fierce was this speech, for Bruce was not given to strong language, and so rigid, set were the lines of his face that Paige and Wainworth stopped again to look at him.

"Stanley!" exclaimed Paige, "a strait-jacket for you as soon as we may find one and anybody with courage and strength enough to put you into it!"

"Don't jest!" replied Bruce, solemnly; "it's too black

for jesting. I talk like one possessed or dispossessed, I know; but I've had a glimpse, true or false, right or wrong, I know not, that fills me with unquiet thoughts. When the time comes you shall know what I saw, or whether I saw aright. There is something to peer into, aye, something to take by the throat and demand an explanation!"

"It is my opinion, Stanley Bruce," volunteered Paige, as they began to climb the ascent on the other side of the valley, and who could see no cause for all the violent emotion shown by Bruce, "that you are spendthrifty—exposing to unwarranted wear and tear the good gray matter—doing exactly, persistently, what may change it to a mass of inert material, for it is an accepted fact that the attempted solution of knotty and troublesome snarls of things with the stomach empty and in a state of collapse is enervating, positively depressing of mind and body and dangerous in the extreme, and—O, here may be a sign board to dinner!" They entered a cultivated field in which a man and a boy or young man were digging potatoes.

"Ben er fishin', hev ye?" observed the man as they approached. "Whar'd ye ketch 'em?"

"In the valley back of us," replied Paige, who carried the string.

"Carley's pond! Thar uster be lots o' fish in that pond er fore ev'ry man an' boy fer miles an' miles round' got ter fishin'."

"Why is it called Carley's pond?" asked Bruce.

"Well, 'cause ol' Mr. Carley uster own ther pond an' ther lan' thar abeouts."

"Does Mr. Carley own the pond now?" persisted Bruce.

"Wal, not 'zactly, he don't! I don't think he owns

much now 'less'n it's the lot he's er layin' in in ther grave yard over by Twisted Tree. He's dead! Ben dead more'n ten year, I should jedge. His sons 'herited it an' sold some o' et, an' split ther best farm in Ouertown. Ther sons live on ther place neow, what's lef', but they're er shif'less pair an' don't dew much farmin'."

"What kind of men are these Carleys—sons of the man you speak of?"

"Kind?"

"Yes; tall, short, dark, light——"

"O, wal, they're dark complected chaps, got black ha'r an' lots o' black whiskers, an' ruther slim in ther legs, purty well dressed! An' it's er wonder ter me, an' ter er good many, I reckon, heow they gits er livin'."

A more skillful delineator could not better describe two of the men seen in the woods.

"Whose fine farm is this?" asked Paige before Bruce could query further.

"This's the Mottle Farm."

"Are you Mr. Mottle?"

"Yis, sir."

"Can we get our fish cooked or buy a dinner at your house?"

"Wal, I dunno! Ye mought. Ye kin ask 'Seneth!"

"'Seneth?"

"Yis, sir; she's deown thar!" swinging his hoe in the direction of the house.

"Sh-she's t-ther b-b-boss!" explained Plym.

"Shall we go across the fields through the orchard, or——"

"Yis, sir! An' ye'll find some good eatin' apples down thar! Ye'll take all ye want! Jest fill yer pockets!"

They thanked him and started across the field to the house.

"Sh-shan't I-I sho'show 'em ther wa'way?" asked Plym.

"No, ye needn't! Jest tend ter yer diggin'! They don't want no showin'. Er man what's ben er fishin'll smell his way ter dinner jes's soon 's ye kin when ye hain't ben er doin' nothin'."

"I-I'd like t-ter know," exclaimed Plym, throwing his hoe around wildly, "e-ef we're er g-g-goin' ter hev any d-dinner t-ter day! M-must be more'n wu-wu-one o'clock! I—I j-jest can't st-stan' et m-much long-longer."

"I ruther guess ye won't git much! Ye don't desarve none—tryin' ter steal off fishin' when ye're lef' ter dig 'taters, an' look eout fer things! Purty chap ye be ter be er scoldin' 'beout dinner!"

The movements in the orchard, as well as the sounds that proceeded thence, now demanded attention. The clarion voice of Aseneth, pitched high, was heard in remonstrance and denunciation.

"Here! What be ye er doin' thar? Let them apples be, I tell ye, ye loafin' critters! Hain't ye nothin' better ter dew'n stealin' folkses' apples? I'll let ye know we don't raise 'em fer every trampin' feller as comes erlong! Don't ye know ye're trespassin', sayin' nothin' o' stealin'?"

"My good woman!" interposed Wainworth.

"Ye needn't 'good woman' me! I seen tew many o' sech folks! Why don't ye tend ter yer business, ef ye've got any, an' not be er thievin' roun' ther kentry? Be off! Fishin'," she continued as she caught sight of the fish, "that's jest like shif'less folks! Allus er fishin' er huntin' er suthin' 'sides workin', dewin' nothin' but er tramplin' deown the mowin' an' er breakin' deown fences an' er lettin' ther cattle all eout ter run over all

creation an' me arter'm! I hain't no patience with ye!"

"We came——" said Wainworth, making another attempt to be heard.

An' ye kin go ergin, tew; ther sooner ther better——"

"We are looking for dinner," said Paige, "and will——"

"O' course ye're lookin' fer dinner, an' ye kin look furder."

At this juncture, Archelaus, with Plym at his heels, appeared. Before Aseneth could send home a volley to Archelaus, as appeared to be her intention, he turned to Wainworth.

"B'ain't ye ther new marster up ter ther 'Cademy? Snum! I thought you ware ther man' though I hain't seen ye often, an' I told 'm," continued Archelaus, addressing Aseneth, "as heow they could hev jest's many apples they wanted. What ye er makin' sech er dew 'bout et fer?"

"Heow ye do s'prise me!" said Aseneth, making a low bow to Wainworth, "an' I seen ye afore, tew! Strange I did'ny know ye! Hope ye'll 'scuse me! Thar's sech er lot o' trampin' folks er takin' ev'rythin' we hev ter be purty keerful, er thar won't be nothin' lef'. Neow, ye come right up ter ther house an' hev jest er bite er suthin'. 'Twon't be no great dinner, 'cause I wan't expectin' nobody! Here, Plym, ye kin dress ther fish, an' fly roun' er ye won't git none!"

"I dew declare!" exclaimed Aseneth when they reached the house and she had adjusted her spectacles. "I dew feel terrubly cut up er talkin' ter sech nice appearin' gentlemen as ye be ther way I was ergoin' on! But erbout ev'ry day in ther week I hev ter be dewin'

er deal o' talkin' ter keep men an' boys outer that orchid."

Her guests assured her that no apology was needed. And then came the dinner, fit for a king if a Paige did sit down to it. What abundance and what a variety! Like every manipulator of good things who basted, brewed and baked for her own sampling and consumption, Aseneth's larder was never empty—never without a rich store of something laid by for an emergency. In some of Ourtown households it was considered an honor, both to guest and host, for the guest to sit at the head of the table and carve.

"Mr. Wain-wor-wor," said Aseneth, stumbling over the name, "won't ye take this cheer an' dew ther passin'? I dessay ye kin dew et han'some! Arch'lus 's sure ter spill ther gravy! Plym, ye're tew near thet grape jell! Ye'll set on ther side nex' yer uncle! Ye ain't desarvin' much, considerin' what ye've ben up ter!"

In the shade of the honeysuckle that grew over the porch, in the quaint ferule back-rockers, was more rest and enjoyment than in the sere and sunburnt fields and the sultry woods. Archelaus and Plym lingered, for the demands of potato digging did not appear to harass them, and Aseneth, after the household duties were performed, joined her guests. Bruce's mind was still busy with the events of the morning—with the old man and the three ruffians. Aseneth was flattered by the visit of the "Marster," as old and young in Ourtown called the teacher at the Academy—now the high school, but formerly an academy, and was led into conversation about the Carleys, the men, evidently, who appeared in the wooded path.

"We uster know ol' Mr. Carley purty well when he was er livin', an' er nice, neighborly man he was, tew;

but his boys, men I suppose they be neow, don't take arter 'm much, I reckon, ef what I hear's true. They're rough sorter men and don't dew nothin' fur's folks can see, 'cept loaf roun' an' wear good clo's, though I did hear as heow they'd giv up farmin' an' gone ter makin' shoes fer er livin'."

"Why, when ol' Mr. Carley was er livin' thet was ther pertest farm in the hull teown; but neow it's all growed up ter weeds an' brush an' ther house's er fallin' deown, an' folks as goes by thar o'nights tells o' hearin' strange noises. Hitty, ol' Mr. Carley's sister, keeps house fer ther boys. She's got ter be er cripple; I don't know heow et happened, an' gits er roun' on er crutch, an' I hear she's er gittin' ter be deef's 'n adder. I uster go ter see Hitty some years back, fer we uster go ter school tergether, an' 'fore ol' Mr. Carley died we uster visit back and forth considruble. She's dreffle smart an' got lots o' book larnin' an' uster teach ther school over in ther Peep Toad pond deestrict. Lor', et's more'n tew year sence I ben ter call on Hitty! Ther las' time I was thar, I didn't injoy ther visit much, fer ther boys ware settin' roun' all ther time an' thet Jack Carley was er dewin' most o' ther talkin! I didn't git ter see Hitty er minute erlone! Hitty uster go ter church reg'ler, 'fore she got lame, but et's er long time sence I seen her thar. I'm er goin' ter see her soon's I git time. I'll hev Plym drive me over thar next week ef I kin git tew et. Ther Carley boys can't skeer me! Don't know's they wanter, but ther las' time I was thar, though they did er sight o' talkin', I sensed I wan't any tew welcome.

"An' them boys, heow ol' Mr. Carley did dote on 'em! They went ter ther 'Cademy, an' somebody said as heow Jack, thet's ther oldest one, was er goin' to be er minister. Lor', ef ol' Mr. Carley could know thet his boys

ware er hangin' roun' Jim Lambert's saloon, deown by Blind Ox road, er good part o' ther time, he'd jest turn over in his grave. But I'm er goin' ter see Hitty! 'Tain't right ter be so onneighborly!"

Late in the afternoon, though pressed to stay to tea, Wainworth and the reporters returned to the village hostelry. After spending the evening with Wainworth, Paige and Bruce returned to the city by a late train. At the next station below Ourtown, a man entered the car and sat immediately in front of the reporters. He was the man who walked behind when the old man in the woods was led back. According to the description of Archelaus and Aseneth, he was not one of the Carleys, but a broader, more muscular man. He was thirty-five or forty years of age; his face was dark and sinister, with a long, drooping mustache, shifting, bead-like black eyes, a thick neck and a square jaw—a man to be shunned, apparently—a man to whom most persons would yield the right of way without protest.

Bruce was still brooding; the spell cast over him in the woods still held him; even in the jollity at the Mottle Farm, he was unusually reserved and silent. He studied the man in front of him as he twisted in his seat and looked at every passenger as a criminal might who feared detection. When they reached the city, Bruce whispered to Paige as they left the car: "That man's a rascal if there ever was one! Let us see where he goes!"

The man hurried away in the shadow of the buildings, avoiding the lighted places, but swift, stealthy as a footpad. So many persons were abroad on this sultry Saturday night that following unobserved was easy. The man with the drooping mustache crossed Bond street and disappeared into a side street; but the reporters caught up with him again and saw him enter a dark alley, from

which entrance was obtained to the rear of the houses on two streets. The alley was unpaved and dark, and Bruce followed the man almost up to the back door of one of the houses, which he entered without key or knock. The front of the house was on Bond street. The reporters noted its distance from the street on either side and then went into Bond street to see which house it was. It was the Lullywick mansion—the palatial residence of the Hon. Theodore Lullywick.

CHAPTER VIII.

PLYM MAKES A DISCOVERY.

"Plym, soon's ye git yer dinner, ye bring up Sandy an' drive me over ter see Hitty Carley. 'Tain't right," continued Aseneth, addressing Archelaus as he was helping himself to a second piece of squash pie, "ter be so fergitful o' ol' frien's! 'Sides, she's er cripple an' can't git roun'! I'm er most ershamed to go! I've staid erway so long! Me 'n Hitty was sech good frien's when we was young! Ef she can't come ter me, I'm er goin' ter her."

"W-which wa-way ye go-goin'?" asked Plym. "Over t-ther Pignut Lane wa-way? E-et's er mi-mi-mighty rocky road, an' lots o' bar-bar-bars ter t-take d-deown!"

"Ye're dreffle 'fraid o' er little work like er takin' deown a few bars! But I shan't trest ye ter drive me over Pignut Lane! We'll go roun' by ther Joe Bill road an up Little Bigger hill."

"An' while ye're goin'," added Archelaus, "ye kin take thet pleow 'long an' leave ter ther blacksmith's fer er new pint."

"S'pose we kin, but I shan't hev tew much time an' don't wanter dew tew much truckin'——"

"An' ye mought's well take 'long er bar'l o' apples ter ther store an' er peck o' crambrys fer ther Widder Bliss, near Rag Weed Swamp——"

"Thet'll dew! Ye needn't load me deown with no more truck! I'll never git nowhar, fer Plym'll hev ter

talk t' ev'rybody an' show off Stump. Neow, git ready, Plym!"

"I—I sh-shan't d-dress u-up!" exclaimed Plym, resolutely.

"Don't ye tell me what ye shan't dew! Ye'll dew one er tew things 'bout's quick's ye kin git ter dew it! Ye'll wash yer feet er put on shoes. I won't ride with sech lookin' feet, an', what's more, don't ye come inter ther house ergin with them feet! I won't hev et! Ever sence ye got ter wearin' all ther colors o' ther rainbow roun' yer neck ye've spruced up er little when ye go ter ther village an' ther postoffice, but roun' home, when ye think nobody's goin' ter see ye, ye're dreffle shif'less yit! I jest wish Lucindy'd ketch ye some day with er yaller necktie an' them feet! I don't b'lieve she'd let you go home with her ergin. I wouldn't ef I was er girl, an' had one good look at 'm! Sure's I live, I'll invite Lucindy over some day jest ter surprise ye! But ye mind what I say an' don't ye come in ther house ergin with them feet!"

"Ye wa-want me t-ter leave m-my fee-feet outside when I—I come in, like ther Turks—t-them fel-fellers Tal-Tallyho was er shoutin' er-er-erbout!"

"Ye bring up Sandy! Ye're gittin' ter be tew great er talker!"

Within an hour, they were on the way, leaving the plow, the apples and the cranberries in their proper places. Arriving at the Carley Farm, Plym left his aunt at the porch door and drove to the dilapidated barn in the rear. He had been warned to stay by Sandy, or they might be obliged to walk home, owing to Sandy's disposition to free himself in spite of all discipline; but Plym had plans of his own to carry out if nothing hindered and had provided a stout chain for Sandy, and with it secured

him by the neck to the tree, from which he could not escape unless he pulled up the tree.

Now was Plym's opportunity—what he had been longing for—an opportunity to satisfy his curiosity. On every other farm in the neighborhood, if not in the town, he was acquainted and familiar with everything belonging to them. That was the custom; every farmer and every farmer's boy was free to walk on to his neighbor's premises without ceremony. Plym had passed the Carley Farm many times on fishing and hunting excursions, and in going to and from his snares, and he wondered and itched to know what there was in the two crumbling barns, the two-story ell and the great house itself. What use could the Carleys make of so much room, when, according to common report and knowledge, their only occupation was pegging shoes, and, as anyone might see the farm was allowed to run riot in idleness and to court the encroaching weeds and brush.

Only idle curiosity impelled Plym to explore. The fact, if it was a fact, that strange and unearthly noises had been heard in the night time by stragglers in Pignut Lane, had come to Plym's ears, and this, with many little facts and incidents of which he had personal knowledge, gave his curiosity a sharp edge. Whether the Carleys were at home or not did not interest him. If they had been standing by, he would look into everything that interested him, as he and other boys were accustomed to do on any farm. He knew the Carleys enough to say "Hullo!" when he met them and to address them by their first names, according to the custom of the town, but his acquaintance was not sufficient to warrant his going on to the farm and into the buildings without an excuse; and now he had it; his aunt was visiting Hitty Carley,

and while he waited, what else could he do to amuse himself and make the time pass quickly?

Plym slipped out of his shoes and then he and Stump began to enjoy themselves by exploring the barns and outbuildings, but there was little to see—only the wreck of what had been pretentious and commodious farm buildings, now falling by piecemeal—a scene of decay and desolation. Plym then turned his attention to the ell of the house, a gaunt, ragged structure with many windows and here and there a blind still hanging, one end of which was abandoned, apparently, the lower part full of litter, lumber and farm implements long unused. Nothing there worth seeing. Stump now caught sight of the common enemy, a black cat, and disappeared.

Plym now mounted the narrow stairway and ascended to the second story, passed through a hallway and came to a door about an inch ajar, and he was on the point of pushing it open when Aleck Carley appeared and stood in the doorway; but as he opened the door he turned and said, "Keep quiet! If I hear anything more from you I'll——" and then he started to leave the room and came face to face with Plym. He filled the open space so that Plym could not see inside of the room. Aleck shut the door with a loud report and then jumped upon Plym, grasped him by the neck and backed him into a dark corner of the hall and placed his knee against him. So unexpected was this onslaught that Plym had not time to collect his thoughts, being slow in mental movements. For a moment he was unnerved and surrendered, meek as a child.

As elsewhere set down, Plym was neither giant nor prodigy, but he was at least the giant of Ourtown, and possibly throughout the state or in New England. No man unless a professional wrestler had such hard fists

and knotty muscles and such strength to back them; and it is also recorded in another part of this narrative that any reference to his impediment was dangerous unless the offender was at a safe distance.

Aleck tightened his hold upon Plym's neck, pressed his knee hard against him, emboldened, perhaps, that Plym made no resistance.

"What in h——l are you doing here, you d——d sneak?"

"D-d-d-doin' noth-nothin'! Je-je-jest er loo-lookin' roun'," gasped Plym, for Aleck held him so tightly that he could hardly breathe.

"D-d-d-doin' noth-nothin' are you? Je-je-jest lookin' roun', eh?"

That was more than Plym could abide; the hot blood surged through his veins when Aleck mocked him and brought his black face nearer, sneered and attempted to drive his fingers deeper into Plym's throat. With a jerk and a twist, Plym not only freed himself from Aleck, but hurled him against the door of the room, out of which he had come. Aleck returned to the combat, when Plym grappled with him, forced him across the hall to a window, where was more light, threw him upon the floor as though he had been a roll of cotton batting, and grasping him by the throat, held him till his eyes began to bulge and his face to grow purple. At that moment Stump came up the stairway with a bound and flew at Aleck's legs, took a firm hold and held on. Plym slackened his grip as Aleck began to squirm under Stump's attention.

"Why, hullo, Plym! Is it you! So dark over there I didn't know you! Why didn't you say so? Hold up! I give in! It's a mistake, I tell you! I didn't know you!

Take off that infernal dog, Plym! He's biting clear through my boot leg!"

"Ye mocked me," said Plym, who forgot to stutter, as he did occasionally when weighty matters filled his mind, and I—I'll jump on any man that d-dares to d-dew it!"

"I tell you, I didn't know you."

"An' ye'll t-ake et b-back?"

"Of course, Plym; all a mistake!"

"An' ye c-alled me er sne-sneak! T-take that b-back?"

"Yes, Plym, anything! That d——d dog's got clear into the bone! Let me up!"

Plym let him up, although he had doubts as to the truth of what he said about knowing him. Stump was persuaded to release his hold on Aleck's boot leg and harmony was restored.

"Why, Plym, what made you think I'd jump on you in that way! I thought it was some tramp poking around!"

"Ef ye ha-hadn't m-mocked me, I would'nt t-teched ye. I-I ca-can't st-stan' that!"

"That's right, Plym! You are square right! I don't blame you!"

"A-aunt 'Se-'Seneth's visitin' M-Miss Hit-Hitty, an I-I was je-jest er loo-lookin' roun' er wa-waitin' fer her. That's all!"

"Look around all you want to, Plym! Come down! I'll show you some of the finest poultry you ever saw!"

"Wh-what ye g-got in that roo-room? Wh-when ye c-come out I-I heered er k-kind o' gro-groanin,' mo-moanin' soun'."

Aleck turned upon him fiercely, although he tried to appear unconcerned. "Groaning, moaning sound? O, yes; perhaps you did! I've got a new dog I'm training. When I get him broke in, I'll come over and go hunting

with you. Are you taking much game in your snares, Plym?"

"Wh-what ki-kind o' er dog ye got?" persisted Plym, whose mind could not be switched off to another trail by any reference to snares. "I-is et er set-setter?"

"Yes," returned Aleck with a wicked gleam in his eyes, "the best setter you ever saw. Do you catch many partridges?"

"Bu-but I-I heered ye t-talkin' t-ter some-somebody!"

Aleck laughed, but it was a forced laugh. "Fact is, Plym, I've got into the habit of talking to that dog as though he was a human being."

"Le-let me s-see'm," suggested Plym, "wh-what be ye 'fra-'fraid of?"

"Can't do it, Plym! He's been making a terrible racket, howling and taking on, and I've just got him calmed down. If I take a stranger in, he'll howl all night. Soon's I get him wonted and trained, I'll come over and we'll have an all day hunt with him! Come down! I've got a new gun to show you!"

They started to go down, Aleck leading. When Plym passed part way down the stairway—when his eyes were on a level with the floor of the hall, he saw a piece of white paper, folded, appear under the door of the room out of which Aleck came, the room wherein was, according to Aleck, the new dog. Plym trembled with excitement; but how could he get that paper without Aleck's knowledge? When he reached the door below and Aleck stepped into the yard Plym turned and bounded up the stairway four steps at a time and ran to the door, but there was no paper there. Aleck was at his heels, but not quick enough to see him snatch the paper if it had been there.

"Wh-whar's my knife?" said Plym, feeling in all his

pockets and looking over the floor. "I-I know I-I had et wh-when I-I hit-hitched S-Sandy, fer I-I cut off er s-sprout with et!" and both Plym and Aleck looked in vain for it. Plym saw that at first Aleck's suspicion was aroused, but it was allayed apparently, and they descended again to the yard. Jack Carley was away, and Aleck engaged with Plym, Aseneth enjoyed her visit with Hitty. As they drove away, Hitty invited her old friend to come again and come soon, and Aleck told Plym "to run over anytime." "I—I will," returned Plym, "I-I'll c-come ter see ye er gin!"

Plym was strangely silent on the way home. There had been little in his life to relieve the monotonous routine of the farm. He had his gun, his snares, his neckties (he wore on this visit a blue polka dot on a white ground) and Stump, and enjoyed life, uneventful as it was, but there had been nothing "to tingle the blood"—nothing to stir and set his ambition on fire, but now—he could hardly sit still. He felt the grip of Aleck's hand on his throat and he squirmed at the thought; and Aleck had mocked him, and lied when he said that he did not know him—he kicked the dash board of the wagon, and wished he had Aleck again by the neck. And what of the dog that Aleck spoke of, and what of the white folded paper that came slowly under the door—what did that mean?

Someone in that room wished to communicate with someone outside. But Plym was puzzled. Whoever thrust out the paper must have known that it would be seen by Aleck! Stay, the paper did not appear till Aleck had passed down the stairs, but how could the person in the room know that fact? Could he tell by the sound of the voice or did he know Aleck's step? Yes, that must be the explanation; and when he ran back, the person in

the room could not tell whether it was Aleck or the stranger. But the smart of personal injury and violence still clung to Plym and he grew hotter as he thought of it. What aroused his wrath afresh was the thought that Aleck looked upon him as a simpleton, thinking that his off hand speech about the dog would be accepted. This is the common inheritance of the race; it is easier to take a blow than insult to intelligence. Another fact came to Plym as he recalled his struggle with Aleck. When he turned Aleck on his back, he saw the stock of a pistol in his hip pocket. The summer boarder already referred to, gave him a revolver, but Plym had a very poor opinion of its usefulness except at close range. Why should Aleck carry a pistol? What could there be in Ourtown, or what could Aleck be engaged in to require the protection of a pistol? Or was it like Aleck's speech—mere bluff and bravado? To Plym this as well as other things was unaccountable unless—and Plym paused in his speculations and took a long breath.

Aseneth talked volubly all the way home, but Plym, busy with his thoughts, did not hear all, and made no reply.

"Ye don't 'pear ter be very chipper," said Aseneth, eyeing him sharply, "I dew hope ye didn't git inter no mischief up thar! What ware ye er dewin' all ther time I was er visitin'?"

"Je-jest er loo-lookin' roun'!"

"Thought ye'd hev er little manners an' come inter see Hitty er minute! What did yer see in yer lookin' roun'?"

"Noth-nothin' 'cept er lot o' tum-tumblin' bu-buildin's."

"Didn't ye see nobody?"

"Yi-yis," said Plym, bitterly, kicking the dash board again, "I-I see Aleck!"

L. of C.

"Ye did! Wal, what'd he hev ter say fer himself? What was he er dewin'?"

"Noth-nothin'! He showed me hi-his g-g-gun, an' tew ski-ski-skiletons he ca-called k-keows. Ye co-could je-jest erbout see right t-t-through'm ef ther was er li-light on ther tother si-side; an' he had er hor-horse. Great Hemlock! Don't b'lieve he'd er too-tooth in hi-his hed, an' I—I—k-knowed he hed t-ther he-heaves, tew ri-ring bones, er whole f-family o' sp-spavins an' er sp-split hoo-hoof. An I-I asked'm of he ware er raisin' bo-bones fer er li-livin'."

"What got inter ye ter be so sassy! Plym, ye'll git inter trouble yit. I expect nothin' else, an' then ye'll wish ye'd done dif'runt!" and she continued to apply the lash till they reached home. Here they found Paige, Bruce and Wainworth, who had sauntered that way. As Archelaus urged them to stay to tea and as both Paige and Bruce appeared to be interested in the fact that Mrs. Mottle was visiting Hitty Carley, they sat in the honeysuckle porch until she returned. At the first visit, Bruce was drawn to Plym by the vigor of his speech, though uncouth and hampered by the stutter, and his ready wit. Moreover, Bruce had suggested a method of breathing by which Plym might stutter less if he would give heed, and Plym had already profited by it, he believed. As Bruce was the first to give kind and helpful advice to aid his faltering tongue, his admiration for "that big black feller," as he called Bruce, was unbounded.

Plym's first impulse was to give Bruce an account of his visit to Carley Farm, for he was sharp enough to see that Bruce, and Paige, too, in conversation with his aunt, were probing for information, and carefully heeding every word she said. But Plym held his peace, soliloquizing, "I-I'll wa-wait! I-I ma-may hev more t-ter tell by'm bye!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE REV. LACROIX TALLYHO MAKES A PASTORAL VISIT.

The next day (after the second visit of Wainworth and the reporters), Archelaus Mottle, when he returned from the village, brought the news that the pastor, the Rev. Lacroix Tallyho, with Mrs. Tallyho and Master Harold Tallyho, intended to favor the Mottles with a visit on the following Thursday.

The Rev. Lacroix Tallyho might be dismissed by a brief description, by a condensed characterization expressed by one word—"Pecksniff." He was a man of large frame and body, loud voice and "great presence;" pompous and overbearing in the presence of those whom he considered his inferiors, and servile and truckling before others. According to what people saw and observed, Tallyho had no equals—all were above or below him—the small minority above him, about which he fawned, and the great majority below him on which he looked with condescension. He was not an educated man. Heavily hampered with conditions, he squeezed into —— university, but at the end of the second year, when or before, every class in every college cuts out the lame and the halt and the blind in the annual round up, Tallyho was dropped, first, because he was a blockhead, and, second, because his deportment was not up to the standard, and when any man leaves college on account of his immoralities, for the benefit of those remaining, the inference is that either the man had no influence to

stay the expulsion, or that he had fallen into the very dregs of things charged against him.

Tallyho was graduated with the toe of the university following his departure; and although Tallyho did not assert, probably, that he was a graduate of the university, yet often he introduced into his sermons and his conversation, the remark, "When I was in college," thus exemplifying his true character, which had no broad streak of truthfulness in it. He had been an editor and had the audacity to write a book, and, worse yet, delivered lectures on any subject required, if the consideration was sufficient and the time in advance ample, for all subjects are treated in books ready to any man's hand and pen.

On one occasion, as Tallyho descended from the platform at the close of a lecture of great power and eloquence, he was met by an irate man, almost unable to keep his hands from the person of Tallyho, who informed the lecturer (Tallyho) that the lecture was his; that he, Tallyho, had cribbed every word of it, title and substance—horse and wagon and everything in the wagon—and the angry man afterward proved his statement to be true. But Tallyho had admirers. Why not? This is an age of brass and bluster, and a part of the people will bow down to a good looking monument of conceit and impudence.

For example, let a little, plain, timid man in a weak voice declare some great truth; there is no response; the audience, or a great part of it, is listless; it is looking for rockets and Roman candles and a little torpedo is not worth heeding; but let a man like Tallyho belch forth in tones of Stentor and in ponderous words with windmill gestures, some worn out senseless platitude, and the

audience, or some part of it, will make an uproar and exclaim, "How fine!"

As a preacher, Tallyho was noisy, verbose and wearisome to the last degree of patience except to those who like sound whether in company with sense or not—to those who enjoy, more than all, the big drum in the band. But the great truths of christianity cannot be concealed by verbiage and verbosity. They will assert themselves in spite of such men as Tallyho to cover them up and to belittle them. Most congregations expect the pastor to winnow the grain for them and give them only solid kernels, but Tallyho's congregation received grain and chaff, particularly chaff, and must winnow for itself. Tallyho was also a philanthropist, and in the practice of his philanthropy (always at the expense of others), a condescending, lordly kind, he had an eye on the preferment and eclat of Tallyho; not a turn of the hand without a careful speculation as to the result to his fame or pocket.

If a hundred men subscribed a thousand dollars to a struggling church or other charity, and entrusted to Tallyho, the donors were eliminated quickly; Tallyho was the man who took the credit. He thrust himself in wherever he could win notoriety for general every day use, and particularly to sell his book, as this incident may illustrate:

Tallyho was traveling in a railway car, when he made the acquaintance of two school teachers on their way to the city to confer with the agent of a steamship company in the hope of securing reduced fares to Liverpool for thirty teachers and their friends. This was Tallyho's opportunity and he offered his services as advocate—to take in hand the agent of the steamship company and compel him by force of argument to yield. If he could succeed,

his name and fame would be given wings in the eulogy of the thirty teachers and their many friends.

At the station, Tallyho met a denominational friend and told him of his mission in behalf of the thirty teachers, and remarked loud enough for the public to hear "I know the agent by reputation! He's a contemptible fellow, but very susceptible—very susceptible to flattery! I'll bring him around!" And he did. In the agent's office, Tallyho grew eloquent, if sound and six legged words make eloquence, as he spoke of the agent's well known philanthropy, of his great liberality and kindness of heart. The agent heard him to the end, and when he stopped for breath and to mop perspiration, he said quietly, "I was standing within a foot of you in the station and heard what you said about the agent of this company. You are given leave to withdraw."

But enough. Tallyho is coming to visit the Mottles. He had little in common with the sterling qualities, the homebred honesty and simplicity of Archelaus or Aseneth Mottle, but Tallyho was a gourmand, a fast and furious eater of the Dr. Johnson capacity, and no housewife in Ourtown could "set a better table" than Aseneth Mottle if she had ample time to prepare, and Tallyho, who knew the lay of the land, was thoughtful enough to give proper warning of his approach. No visitor swept the board so clean in so short a time as Tallyho, and Aseneth was pleased and satisfied with anyone who had an appetite that might be depended upon in all weathers and circumstances.

Immediately on the receipt of the news of Tallyho's visit, Aseneth began to wrestle with the cook book (the great enemy of all sober and self respecting stomachs) and kettles, pots and pans danced a jig to her impatient handling—not exactly impatient, but nervous and ap-

prehensive lest the great man's sweet tooth (or all of his good and ready grinders) might fall on something not to his liking. Archelaus dreaded the coming of the pastor, first, because he did not like him over much as a preacher, as he had never understood a word he said in the early part of the sermon and did not hear any more, if he was not too loud, owing to the embrace of sweet sleep, and second, because he must "dress up" and sit patiently in the parlor with the guests and listen with heavy eyelids to Tallyho's ponderous growlings.

Plym was indifferent to all features of the visit except one—the supper. He knew that the semi-annual harvest (Tallyho came twice a year) of all good things known to cookery in that age of the world as far as heard from in Ourtown by means of cook books (villainous disturbers of the peace) would be spread out for Tallyho and his boy Harold, and he was determined that they should not encroach upon his share. He must appear in his Sunday suit, and although that chafed him, yet the supper was worth the sacrifice of usual comfort and freedom for an hour.

In view of the fact that a great presence was about to shed its radiance for the enlightment of the Mottles, Plym volunteered to "slick up the place"—clear the garden lot, near the house, of dead leaves, stalks and vines—the garbage of the year as far as that quarter acre was concerned—and make a bonfire. Uncle Archelaus and Aunt Aseneth were pleased with Plym's apparent interest in the tidiness of the farm, although they gave no expression to their thoughts in Plym's presence, for it appeared to be a part of their social and domestic economy to steer clear of any honorable mention of their nephew, believing that soft words, like feather beds, led to laziness.

Although the distinguished guest was not due for several days, Plym began forthwith to scrub the face of the farm roundabout the house, removing unsightly things to the pile of rubbish in the garden lot, stroking the grass, that is combing the hair of the sides of the lane leading to the highway with a hay rake, and turning the sticks of the great wood pile in the yard, one way to shed rain and give an air of neatness.

Plym's industry was remarkable and Aseneth remarked cautiously to Archelaus that that boy, really, was beginning to show his bringing up and his thankfulness for it. But if his Aunt had been watchful after nightfall she might have seen Plym carefully depositing in the great heap of rubbish accumuating rapidly in the garden patch, old boots and shoes and any unwholesome odds and ragged and odorous ends gleaned here and there on the farm; and if she had been in close proximity as he labored in the gloaming with his rags and tags, she might have heard him chuckle softly to himself as though his mind dwelt upon cheerful things to come. The great mound of unnamable ingredients appeared to be an innocent aggregation of frayed cornstalks, withered pea and cucumber vines, dead grass and harmless rakings, for in the pith of the heap was carefully concealed what was within, that part intended, like plums in a loaf, to give flavor to the whole concoction.

On the arrival of the guests, Plym, much against his will, for he had a lofty, sniffing contempt for the race of Tallyhos, undertook to show young Harold Tallyho, a dull, overfed boy of sixteen, the objects of interest in barn, stable and granary. They came at last to the back porch of the house where was growing a plant in a green tub; the plant produced red berries as large as cranberries, smooth and glossy in their blushing fatness and ap-

parent lusciousness. Plym plucked two of the berries and thrust them into his mouth, but was careful to remove them under cover of his hand. Young Tallyho, ever looking for something to ease stomach longing, followed Plym's example, and placed two or more in his mouth.

At this point, Plym wisely decided that absence on his part might be more to his advantage, and departed hurriedly and his heels disappeared around the corner of the barn as young Tallyho began to bellow, to roll in the grass, to kick and spit as though possessed of an evil spirit, and well he might, for these alluring red berries were peppers, hot as fire. Tallyho and his wife, and Archelaus and Aseneth rushed to the rescue, for Harold was making a great uproar and waking the echoes. Plym in his safe retreat saw them lead the screaming boy into the kitchen, where he was dosed with honey, cream and pound cake. Aseneth declared that Plym had a hand in this, but as Harold held his tongue, from the burns upon it, although pound cake disappeared like corn in the chicken yard, Plym was not called to an account.

When the excitement subsided and Plym heard again Tallyho's sonorous tones in wise debate, and knew that "visiting" in the parlor had been resumed, he saw young Tallyho sitting upon the back doorstep wiping the tears and eating eagerly a half round cranberry tart made expressly for him. Glancing at the weathervane and chuckling, Plym ran quickly to the heap of rubbish in the garden and set fire to it in a dozen places, and quicker than can be told, a great volume of yellow smoke arose and, borne by the gentle wind, was carried directly into the parlor, for the day was warm and the windows open, and filled the house not only with smoke, but also with an odor of indescribable flavor and pungency.

But the first whiff brought the parlor windows down. Archelaus appeared as the fire was beginning to do its duty—seizing eagerly on the inflammable, nauseating material in the heart of the pile, and in spite of swaddling in blue broadcloth, scattered the embers; Aseneth followed with a pail of water and the fire yielded reluctantly. Archelaus ordered Plym to the feeding house to cut pumpkins and to prepare the big kettle for boiling; and Aseneth cautioned him not to come to the supper table. "I shant hev ye!" she exclaimed. "Don't ye come ter ther house till ther company's gone! Don't ye dare!"

When supper time approached, Plym struggled into his Sunday suit, basted his hair with bear's oil, and after trying three neckties, decided upon a purple tie with a green vine running over it. Then he tiptoed into the kitchen and announced, "N-now, Aunty, I—I'll he-help ye s-s-set ther sup-puper table!" He knew how to mollify his aunt; she could not resist him when he called her "Aunty." He arranged his place at the table behind a raspberry jam shortcake for the reason, he told his aunt—

"T-ter pre-prevent thet young f-forever e-e-eatin' an' er st-st-stuffiin' T-Tallyho boy from gi-gittin' et all an' ki-ki-killin' himself! Y-ye've gi-gin 'm so much p-pie an' p-p-poun' c-cake, neow, I-I expect ter hev t-er go f-fer ther doc-doctor, yit! Ef I-I d-dew, I-I sha'nt hur-hurry!" F-fore we g-git t-through sup-pup-er, I-I expect ter hev t-ter t-take 'm by ther shoul-shoulders an' stan' 'm u-pup ergin ther wa-wall, an' sh-shake 'm like er b-bag o' cor-corn ter git more in!"

But the longest day comes to an end, and to Archelaus it was the longest in the year, for he must listen patiently to his guest, and nod assent at proper intervals; no chance to bow his head on the pew in front, look at his

boots and yield to sweet sleep. Relieved at last and out of his broadcloth bandage, he climbed the ladder to the scaffold, had a bout with his enemy (or friend) the Tallyho shaped bag, and went to his milking with spirits restored and mind serene.

The only result of the visit not recorded in which the reader may be interested, was the avowed determination of Tallyho to visit Carleys and attempt to reclaim his lost sheep. Ninety-eight of his flock were accounted for, but the two, the Brothers Carley, were still astray and must be brought into the fold. Aseneth sent the matter home to his understanding in her blunt, matter of fact way; Hitty Carley was a member of his church, in good and regular standing, and he had never visited her; and the boys, long fallen from grace, according to appearances, probably not deceptive, might be brought to see the error of their ways and adorn the mourner's seat.

And who, who, unless the pastor of the church of which their father had been a pillar, in and out of season, should lead in the work of reclamation? Tallyho admitted the justice of her remarks, was complimented by her high opinion of him, and promised "to take the boys in hand" immediately. How he succeeded, is related in the next chapter.

CHAPTER X.

TALLYO AND THE ANT HEAP.

Within a week, Tallyho knocked at the door of the Carley Mansion and was admitted by Mr. Jack Carley himself, the elder son, who had the reputation, perhaps undeserved, of being a hard man generally, and not at all in sympathy, probably, with anything represented by the Rev. Lacroix Tallyho.

Jack blocked the way, scowled upon the visitor and appeared to be in doubt about admitting him, for he knew him by sight and reputation well enough, and had for him as for all others, if report be true, only scant courtesy. But Hitty saw Tallyho approach, appeared at the door and invited him to enter. Jack gave way, became gracious, apparently, and began the task of entertaining the guest.

The day was warm, and Tallyho, a heavy weight (since he carried such a load of heavy thoughts and ideas to match), pushing and puffing up Little Bigger hill with the sun on his back, was heated and perspiring. He asked for water, and Jack Carley, immediately animated with great interest in his visitor's welfare, suggested cider —sweet cider, just sprung from juicy pippins, Seek no Furthers, Crow's Eggs and Hubbardstown Nonesuchs, and leached through a cask of finest blotter sand from Blocker Isle's smoothest beach. Jack rattled through this recommendation like an auctioneer who had great bargains to offer. Aleck entered and Jack introduced him with so much mock ceremony, genuflexions, lingual

quips and quirks, that a hectic flush came into Hitty's cheeks to emphasize the indignation set forth by moist eye and trembling lip. If Tallyho had given study to many men of many moods—if he had been able to see through a grindstone when there was a hole in the center, he might have seen or suspected that Jack Carley and his sweet cider were conspirators united to cause him, if his eyes were not stretched wide, much brain tossing and leg weakening.

Tallyho was a temperance advocate—an advocate of total abstinence—loud and emphatic, *pugnis et calcibus*, but considering the character of the man and the fact that Tallyho had no stiff-necked principles, to carry his point, he would not hesitate to countenance, even to participate in what might compromise a man of his position and pretension. Presumably, he had come to the Carley Farm on a mission connected with his pastoral office; if he had eyes to see, he must discover at a glance that Jack Carley was a hard man with the stamp of ruffian upon every word and gesture; but he wished to conciliate, get down to his level, strange as it may appear, and then strike his harvest sickle home; like a bundle of elastic rods around a magnet, his principles, pliant as sapling shoots, bent to the purpose; and in this world are many minds cast in the Tallyho mould; their name is legion and also, hypocrit.

While sweet cider may not be listed among the intoxicants, yet the consistent advocate of total abstinence may be compromised by its use; and Tallyho had set up a standard, and if he adhered to it, sweet cider was barred out. Tallyho replied to Jack's suggestion in much good humor and drollery of speech assumed on all social occasions. He declared that cider was practically an unknown beverage to him, and that he had only recollec-

tion of it as a boy when he trod the wine press himself (a figure of speech to proclaim "barefoot days"), and that he had forgotten almost what cider was like.

Jack withdrew and soon returned with a brimming pitcher and a large glass tumbler, which he filled and passed to Tallyho. Tallyho was thirsty and drained the glass at one breath. If there was anything in the world to which Tallyho gave his whole soul, it was eating and drinking; no small dabs at a brace of ducks and no playing and sipping with less than six cups of tea or coffee—often scoring up near a full dozen—could satisfy a man of his stomach. Jack filled the glass again, and as quickly did it follow the other; a third came to time promptly and went on its thirst-quenching errand. Jack started to pour a fourth, when Hitty seized her crutch and sprang up. In Jack's sly glances to Aleck, the sinister smile that played under his nose, she saw mischief; her face showed alarm, indignation and protest.

Tallyho saw this movement on the part of Hitty, withheld his hand and stopped his wassail. Now, anyone acquainted with cider knows well enough that old sweet cider is a hard kicker—as dangerous as apple jack or whiskey when the stomach is resting from its labors and has nothing to concern itself about except preparation to receive the next meal; and Jack Carley had placed before Tallyho sweet cider three years old—sweet and delicious but a most powerful intoxicant; and three brimming bumpers—old fashioned tumblers—had invaded that quiet stomach trying to take a nap and get a little rest and comfort before the six o'clock incrowding, causing it to arouse itself in alarm and to send speedily messengers to the brain to learn the meaning of it.

Tallyho began to talk in his large way as usual, addressing his remarks chiefly to Hitty. Hitty was relieved

and became more cheerful; but three good quaffs of that smooth liquor began to take part in the conversation by clogging Tallyho's utterance and tripping him up in some of his own snares and tongue catchers (words with six legs, and the legs all dancing)—in sorry truth, Tallyho was yielding to heavy eyelids and lopping head—and knew it. Realizing in some sense his predicament, he sprang to his feet and with hat in hand, staggered to the door; Hitty also arose, but before she could interfere, if that was her intention, Jack and Aleck ran forward, took Tallyho by the arm, hurried him through the hall, out of the house and into the wooded path—Pignut Lane.

As the trio entered the lane, Plym, on a hunting excursion, turned into Pignut Lane from Little Bigger Hill Road. He seized Stump by the collar and sprang into the brush. But it was unnecessary; the Carleys were going in the opposite direction and had not seen him. Why Tallyho was with the Carleys did not appear or interest him, for, the moment Plym saw the backs of the Carleys the thought of something else filled his mind. His encounter with Aleck Carley was still fresh in his recollection and every reminder of it was like the prick of a pin—it hurt. Since that day, Plym had passed the Carley Farm many times; he approached it on all sides, and at a distance, concealed in the brush or in tree tops, studied the exterior of the house and all he saw go on there, which was not much. He saw that something was wrong or unusual with Tallyho, for occasionally he released his arm and gesticulated wildly, his voice resounded like the blare of a trumpet, and, strangest of all, his legs, those ever well dressed and decorous bow legs, were on tiptoe and prancing for jig. The loud laughter of the Carleys chimed with Tallyho's song, for now he

was singing, and Plym regretted that more important business prevented him from following at a safe distance in the underbrush and learning more.

But now was Plym's opportunity, what he had long looked for, and if Tallyho had helped him, then three cheers for Tallyho. He ran back to the road, down it a bit, into the brush behind the barns, and left his gun and game bag. Swift as a deer he ran to the door of the ell out of which he had come that day with Aleck. It was locked. Plym was in a quandary. Was there no way to get to that room? Must he give it up? Ha! An idea comes! With other boys and by himself Plym had played the game of "swing low." This was suggested by bending down saplings for snare crooks. To swing low, the boy climbed into the top of a small tree and then swung back and forth until, going a little further out on the tree, swung off to the ground.

There was a tree, a young hickory, tough as a whip of whalebone, near the ell and pitched toward it. Plym estimated as he measured the tree and the ground with his eye, that if he could not see into the room through the window, nearly opposite the tree, by climbing into the tree, he might swing down; and if he did, he believed that the tree would swing him up to the side of the house and to the window, where, if he could not see much, he might attract attention and get that slip of folded white paper, thrust out, he believed, for his benefit under the door when he was present on a former occasion.

But he must see if the coast be free. He ran to the corner of the house; no one was in sight and no sound came to him; as he retraced his steps on the run, he saw Hitty at the window leaning on her crutch and wiping her eyes. The sight of Hitty in her manifest distress unnerved him for a moment. She stared at him but made

no sign. If she staid where she was and did not go into the other side of the house, she could not see him; and if she did see him, what of it? If anything wrong was in progress there, he knew that Hitty, willingly, had no hand in it.

Plym ran back and went up the tree like a squirrel till he is opposite the window, but it is dark; if there be a window on the other side of the room, it must be closed or curtained, for no light comes through. He climbed higher and still higher and now the tree begins to yield to his weight and is going down with an easy sweep like a true swing low bender. But he had miscalculated the distance or the height of the tree, and he saw it as he began to swing, when it was too late. He landed on the roof, but that did not matter; he could swing off and thus down to the ground; in some way unaccountable, however, the tree slipped through his hands and proudly swung back to an upright position buoyant again to be rid of such a heavy burden.

This was contrary to all planning and for a moment staggered Plym. There he was, on the roof with no visible means of reaching the ground without a broken neck or leg, and there was Stump on the ground barking furiously, calling attention and as much as pointing him out to anyone who might like to know.

He climbed to the ridge pole to reach the other side of the roof—out of sight of Stump, but Stump charged around the ell, appeared on the other side with his bark keyed several notes higher. The perspiration stood in great drops on Plym's forehead; the Carleys might appear at any moment, and, possibly, he might be a target for Aleck's revolver. In his desperation, he kicked the roof and his foot (he had at last been driven into boots, for the earth and plants and fences now wore white mit-

tens early in the morning) went nearly through the shingles and roof board.

In less time than it takes to tell it, he was in the attic under the moss grown, rotten roof. The floor of the attic was only partly boarded and the ceiling of the room below had fallen in many places. His stout boot made a passage, and he let himself down into the room below. Lo, it was unoccupied and strewn with litter under a thick coating of dust. The upper story of the ell was divided into two rooms; before Plym swung down he believed that he would come near the room next to the upright part of the house where was the object of his curiosity; evidently such was the case if the rooms of the ell were divided equally; but they were not divided equally, the room next to the main house being smaller than the other; hence he had missed again. Plym made a hurried examination of this abandoned room. There was the door of the room in the occupant of which he was interested, but it had not been opened for a long time, for a mass of cobwebbing filled the space between jamb and casing.

He had, he thought, missed his opportunity, and saw it when it was too late. The attic into which he made his way from the roof was undivided. If he had his wits about him, he complained, he might have entered the other attic and reached the room below as he had this, as the boarding, or the ceiling, probably, was not much different. Without expecting result to his advantage, Plym knocked on the cobwebbed door and kicked it with his heavy boot and listened. He jumped as he heard a movement of somebody or something within; the next moment, before his hair would lie down and let his hat rest on his head, a piece of white paper neatly folded appeared under the door; he snatched it and read

what was written within it; his eyes stood out; he gasped; kicked the door three times as requested by the writer of the note; thrust the paper in his pocket and prepared to make exit. Raising the window and seeing no one, he let himself down till his toes touched the casing of the window below, jumped down and ran to the place where he left his gun and game bag.

The gun was gone, also the bag with two partridges in it. Who had done this? And then he discovered that Stump was missing. For the moment he had forgotten Stump. When he disappeared in the roof, Stump's bark stopped, or he did not heed it, and now the dog and gun had taken themselves off. Perplexed and angry at the loss of his gun, Plym stared blankly around. Hark! There was Stump's bark! He hastened on in the direction in which the sound came and it led him to the path taken by the Carleys—to Pignut Lane.

Within a stone's throw of it, Stump came to meet him, barking loudly and bristling. Plym seized him, drew a cord from his pocket and wound it around Stump's nose, and thus muzzled, let him go. Cautiously, he followed Stump to the edge of the path. On the opposite side was the gun and the bag at its butt. No one was in sight, but Plym heard voices in the distance lower down toward the pike. He ran across the path, took his gun and bag, and entered further into the forest bearing round to the valley below.

Plym knew every rod of the woods, every dell and knoll, and running to the base of the hill, he placed the gun and bag in a clump of laurel and tied Stump, still muzzled, to a tree. Going further down the slope, he turned abruptly and, led by the sound of voices, crept up to Pignut Lane again. If his gun had not fallen in somebody's way, he would walk boldly into the Carley

presence, but, now, if he appeared, he might be identified, although he could not see how, with the gun, and asked to explain.

Plym was near enough to the play to see all that went on without disclosing his presence. A third man was with the Carleys, a broad-shouldered man having an evil, black face and a long, drooping mustache. He was on intimate terms with the Carleys and addressed them by their given names. He was the man, probably, who found the gun, leaving it where it was found till he returned with the Carleys to the house. But where did he come from and how did he stumble on the gun?

Tallyho was in the clutches of deep and clinging intoxication—past the maudlin, incoherent stage—and stupidly incapable of speech or locomotion. The Carleys and the other man made the woods ring as they tried to provoke Tallyho to oratorical effort. But, as was made known afterward, the Carleys never left the house long at a time for sufficient reason, and apprehensive, as was natural in such cases, of what might take place in their absence, they prepared to leave Tallyho and to make a comfortable resting place for him.

Near the turn in the lane where the rascals paused to have sport with their victim, was a large ant heap. Plym knew it well and often stopped to watch the movements of the inhabitants. The Carleys and the third man proceeded to conduct Tallyho to the heap. Plym clenched his hands; could it be possible that they would place Tallyho on the heap?

"Gr-great hem-hemlock! E-ef ye d-dew, an' d-don't git er wa-way pu-purty quick arter ye d-dew et, I—I'll je-jest st-strike in e-ef et costs er leg—e-ef I—I gi-git li-licked outer m-my boo-boots! I—I hai'nt f-fergot, Mi-sis-ter Aleck, heow ye pin-pinched my neck, an'

m-mocked me an' li-lied ter me, an' I—I d-don't intend ter f-fergit et, nu-nuther! I—I don't keer f-fer fi-fightin' er lickin' ye, though I—I kin dew et han'some; bu-but e-ef I—I kin je-jest b-beat ye 't yer little game, I—I'll ca-call et sq-squar!"

But Plym's soliloquy was cut short by his own emotions as he saw the preparations made for exposing Tallyho to possible death. Jack Carley knocked away the top of the ant heap with the limb of a tree and scooped it out a little; then the third man and Aleck placed Tallyho in what they called his pulpit, asking him if it were not softer and more comfortable than plush or any kind of upholstering; a moment they stood off and looked at him, mocking and laughing and asking him to tip them a sermon on temperance or any subject, not being particular, provided they could hear the rich melody of his voice; and, with parting jeers and oaths, they left him and walked rapidly away.

Plym rushed forth and with a jerk drew Tallyho off the ant hill, and by great effort, pushing, and a part of the way carrying, he succeeded in getting Tallyho down the slope through the thick underbrush and trees, into the deeper wood in the valley below where the Carleys would not find him if they returned, as he expected they would, for he could not believe that they, at least Aleck, would leave this man to perish, as he might and as they knew he might.

Now, Plym stood in great and ever-increasing awe of Tallyho and his stutter choked him when he attempted to speak in his presence. To his aunt he said little in depreciation of Tallyho, for he knew that she respected him or his office; and he had too much love for her to say aught against him; but to his uncle his speech was free. Archelaus never spoke disparagingly of anyone, but

Plym believed he had no great liking for the preacher, and, hence, relieved his mind, and declared his intention "ter git squar" with him. But this was pure buncombe and blarney, for in the presence of Tallyho Plym was dumb as an oyster. Although he had no faith in Tallyho's sincerity, yet he admired him, or, rather, that part of him most prominent, that is, his power of speech, his audacity and his large magnificence, generally.

Now, sent by chance to help him out of a very serious predicament, and realizing his importance in the present crisis, his zeal knew no bounds. Plym removed Tallyho's overcoat, now swarming with ants, and carried it away and hung it on a tree; the inside coat was disposed of in the same way, also the vest. Plym's hand was no soft and spongy padder, but broad and hard as a wood chopper's beetle. In his haste and anxiety to relieve the pastor, who began to cry out and jump when an exploring ant nipped him, Plym applied his hand with such vigor that an ox might have staggered under the blows. While Tallyho managed to keep to his feet by clinging to a tree, Plym ran his hand over the broad back, and when he felt an ant beneath the shirt of the victim, he brought his hand down upon that ant with a resounding whack that made Tallyho jump and groan.

At this juncture, Stump appeared, and, seeing his master dealing blow after blow upon this big body, flew at Tallyho's legs in bristling fury. It was fortunate that Stump was still muzzled with the cord. Every time Plym raised his hand to punish an ant discovered under the nether garments, he must also throw out his foot to catch Stump, for Stump was determined to thrust in as many blows as his master. Under this massage treatment and the nipping of the ants, Tallyho began to hold up his head and to realize what was going on and to do a

little fighting on his own account. At last Plym led him to a brook, where he bathed his head and face and quenched his thirst. Leaving him by the brook, Plym returned for his gun and bag, and then conducted Tallyho out of the woods by a circuitous route to give his legs time to get in order and acquire confidence to carry him without wobbling. During this "walking off" process, if a stray ant, overlooked in the general hunt and rummage, grappled with Tallyho and doubled him up and twisted his face awry, Plym's hand came to the rescue, and Stump, still muzzled and still unsatisfied, joined in with all the vigor and strength he could summon and attacked Tallyho's legs. In the twilight when the trees and fences cast long shadows in which even a large man might pass unnoticed, Tallyho was led to the highway, pointed homeward, and at his request was surrendered to his own pilotage.

Plym may have rescued Tallyho from certain death. The household of this family of ants which Tallyho invaded was an old one, respected for reasons of prudence by all who passed that way; the house, the mound of earth where the ant family had its home, was at least six feet at the base and three or four feet high and over and through this habitation swarmed an immense number of ants, jealous of their rights and ready at poke of cane or press of vandal foot to fight for them. And yet Tallyho made no return to Plym for this service—not a word of thanks; not a look or gesture expressing gratitude escaped him.

A few days afterward, Plym met Tallyho at the post-office, and thinking he had the right, considering the service he had rendered the great man, to approach him with some familiarity, as he did all acquaintances, accosted Tallyho, not exactly familiarly, certainly with no

bravado or boorishness, and inquired about his health. Tallyho answered curtly, turned his back on Plym and walked away. Plym's stutter did not prevent him from making free with any subject that demanded lingual attention, but he could keep a secret if his mind had time to think upon it and come to a decision.

He knew that Tallyho was drunk on that day, from what cause he knew not as yet, and he knew, also, that the fact ought to be kept under cover, not on account of Tallyho, but that the church of which his aunt, whom he respected and loved more than anybody else in the world, was a member, might not be brought into disrepute. Not a word escaped Plym. The story of Tallyho's visit to the Carleys leaked out through the much talking and bragging of Jack and Aleck, but as it could not be traced to any source considered reliable, it was not believed, since Tallyho, with usual speed and audacity of tongue, stamped the story as infamous, without a stray letter of truth in it anywhere.

This again set forth the character of Tallyho. While Tallyho was tricked into drunkenness against his will or purpose, yet that did not change the actual fact. But he denied with emphasis and the proper show of indignation. If Tallyho in his dire necessity had been relieved—drawn from the jaws of a million ants if not from death—by a nabob with coach and pair, gold on the harness and gilt on the wheels, driver on the box wearing a cockade, footmen behind, seamen in the sound hearing his bellow of thanks might run ashore in Blindman's Crack, thinking that Judith's foghorn had been supplanted or drifted many a league northward.

But this stammering boy, this farmer's hand and chore bub who ran barefoot all summer with baggy trousers

hung by one suspender, was beneath the notice of a man of Tallyho's calibre.

When any man in his egotism reaches that point in his straining and stretching where he considers himself superior to any part of unstained humanity—that man has become ignoble and detestable.

CHAPTER XI.

AN ITINERANT VENDOR OF SMALL WARES.

The year had turned into the fourth quarter stretch, and, having no competitors, and weary, may be from the three quarter run, was jogging along slowly to its goal that all who had eyes for bright colors happily blended might see and admire the splendor of its jockey October.

The motherly hen, still talking, scolding and scratching for the brood of fourteen untimely born (still undressed and not fit to dress for table) that inner fire of stuffed crop and active gizzard might blunt the keen edge of atmospheric pressure, or dull the chicks' perception of it, was growing pale and hollow-eyed from overwork and anxiety and the lack of sunny nesting places (chicks' toe warmers) night and morning.

Late in the afternoon while Aseneth Mottle with quick and solid step was removing from the porch to the house trays of sliced apple placed in sun to dry and cure, to swell unwholesome (according to Plym) pies in the winter season, a man turned into the lane from the highway and approached the house. He was old, apparently, for his beard and hair were white or nearly so; the man limped and walked slowly with the help of a cane; over his shoulder was slung a pack and in his left hand he carried a black bag; he wore blue goggles and picked his way as though he had reached the summit of life or something, and was afraid of falling over.

"I don't want nothin'!" shouted Aseneth before the

peddler had advanced a dozen steps in the lane. "Ye needn't come no furder! I sha'n't buy er thing, I tell ye!" But the man did not hear or heed.

"I tell ye I don't want nothin'!" exclaimed Aseneth, pitching her voice up to the house peak. "Can't ye hear nothin'! I hain't no time ter waste with peddlin' folks! Ye kin go right back ter ther rud, an' go erbout yer business!"

But the peddler plodded on, looking neither to the right nor to the left and giving heed to every step. Aseneth, not used to such disregard of her voice, now at its full, and her command, now set forth with strength, hurled another volley at the approaching stranger; it had no effect, however, and her words fell like pith balls on a pachyderm. The peddler came up to the porch, threw down his pack with an exclamation of relief, stretched back to unkink his spinal column, and began to show the varied and various wares with which he had been loaded.

"Hain't I telled ye till I'm hoarse 's er crow, I don't——"

The peddler placed his hand to his ear. "Ye'll hev ter speak up purty good! I'm er leetle hard o' hearin'."

"What! Ye're deef? Wal, I thought suthin' was ther matter with ye! Leetle hard o' hearin', be ye? Bless me, ye're ther hardest hearin' chap I most ever kem acrost! What ye roun' peddlin' fer ef ye can't hear nothin'? Ye won't make yer salt!"

During this expression of opinion in a soliloquy, the peddler spread out his wares over the porch and in the trays of drying apples, and talked—thrust in two words to Aseneth's one—with the ready volubility of a real estate man selling corner lots, unlimbered and oiled up after vacation. Aseneth was squelched; she could not

rail at a deaf man because it availed nothing, and she surrendered, sitting in the doorway while the peddler's tongue tripped along merrily. Now it was busy and jumping with the product of the looms of Tuscany; now it fell upon a Swiss horn comb warranted not to corrode in any climate; now it set forth the value and the "joy forever" in a pink gingham dress pattern, and now it rattled on without a stop on the merits of Attleboro hair pins—exact copies of those worn by Queen Victoria.

"Lor', heow ye do run on! Ef ye was paid accordin' ter yer talkin', ye'd be wuth suthin' by this time! Whar'd ye git all this truck? Like's not ye smuggled et! I hain't much patience with these totin' peddlers! I got terrubly took in er while back——"

"Wal, neow, ma'am, why not hev er leetle patience with er peddler! What ye got ergin 'm? Ef thet feller er while back cheated ye, thet's no sign I'm er goin' tew ef I kin, an' I kinder think 'twould take er purty slick man ter git er head o' ye! Thet's my opinion, ma'am, takin' things 's I see 'm. I'm jest er tryin' ter git 'n honest penny an' make er livin'. I tell ye, it's dreffle hard er trampin' up an' down ther dusty roads, fightin' off dogs an' er gittin' talked tew by wimmin as don't want nothin'. Why, ma'am, I hain't hed er rousin' meal o' vittles—wal, not lately—'most fergit when 'twas."

"Sho! Didn't ye hev no dinner ter day?"

"Only helf er dinner, ma'am—jest er scrap—giv ter me way back erlong by er woman in er blue caliker with a red head an' er pimple on her nose, an' she snapped ter me so I didn't more 'n helf enjoy ther meal. An' whar I'm ter git supper, I hain't no idee——"

"Ef ye'll sell thet scaf an' comb kinder reasonable

like, I mought find ye jest er bite o' suthin'. What's yer price fer both?"

"Shillun sixpunce."

"Why don't ye talk cents? I don't know nothin' erbout shillun sixpunces!"

'Thirty-seven cents! I'll giv ye the scaf and ther comb fer supper, lodgin' an' breakfast. D'ye say et's er bargain?"

"I dunno! I'll see what Arch'l'us 'll hev ter say erbout et. Ye kin walk in! Supper's most ready!"

When the table was cleared and the family and the guest came around the evening lamp, the battle of words began, but Aseneth was no match for the peddler, aided by his great deafness. His tongue could weave words into high-colored yarn (very much stretched) with great celerity—outrun Aseneth's and turn a somersault and rest between each word. Plym, lying on the settle on his stomach with his feet in the air and the heels knocking together, making a gentle tattoo in the general engagement and fusillade, grinned, chuckled, laughed till he ached, and enjoyed himself. Archelaus, behind his paper, looked over it and his spectacles and watched the combat with growing interest. In a lull when both forces were taking breath and preparing for another assault, Plym reeled off a story of his adventures in the month of August in the meadow, where he encountered and dispatched a snake seven feet two in length and counted "more'n four hundred other snakes er rarin' an' er pitchin' at him."

"Thet remin's me of er story," said the peddler. "Erbout forty years ergo, when I was er young man, work er gittin' skurce and skurcer, an' ev'rybody was er shoutin', 'Git out West, young man!' I packed my carpet bag an' went. Wal, 'twas in ther fall o' ther year,

when ther farmers was er gittin' in ther grain. In them arly days, ther reapin' was all done by han', but neowadays, Lor'! thar's er machine thet cuts and bin's an' thrashes ther wheat jest as et goes erlong, puts in the fixin's in the flour, mixes et, an' bakes et, an' jest throws eout loaves o' bread, 'sides puttin' er nice piece o' white paper roun' ev'ry loaf, tied by er purty pink string in er double bow knot, an' ef needed et packs ther loaves in er box, nails et up an' puts er label on ther box.

"Wal, as I was er sayin', I went eout West an' I hired eout ter er farmer, an' 'fore I'd ben thar long, I went inter ther fiel' ter bin' wheat. Snakes? Ther most pizenist ken' ye ever saw were plenty—rattlers 's thick 's fish worms arter er rain. Wal, arter I'd boun' up ther wheat on erbeout 'n acre, I see when I laid deown ther las' bundle, et was er movin', an' immejiate, eout come er rattler more 'n six foot long. Er lookin' back erlong over ther fiel', I see ev'ry bundle er movin' an' outer ev'ry one crawled the biggest rattler ye ever see. Kinder strange, wan't et, I should hev boun' up ev'ry one o' 'm an' not know et, on erbeout er'n acre."

Plym gasped and then roared, Archelaus laid down his paper, took off his glasses and carefully wiped them, and Aseneth, eying the peddler suspiciously, shouted:

"Ye're 'most 's good 's Plym er tellin' snake stories! Ye'd make er good pair! Arch'l'us," she added in a lower tone, "ye'd better lock up tight. Er man er tellin' sech stories ain't ter be 'pended on. I'll put my silver spoons under my pillow, an' I shan't sleep er wink, nuther. But et's time he was put ter bed! Plym, he's ergoin' ter sleep with ye——"

"N-no he-he ain't!" whispered Plym, stoutly. "I—I wo-won't s-sleep with no sech ol' duf-duffer. I—I'll st-stay right on t-ther set-settle here! I—I je-jest 's

lives. Ket-ketch me in er b-bed with thet ol' racker-bones! N-not ef I—I know e-et!"

The rain fell in torrents the next morning, and as the product of the looms of Tuscany and the Swiss horn might suffer in the downpour, the old peddler made himself comfortable in a rocking chair. Aseneth thrust into his lap a big pan of apples and gave him a knife to pare and core and slice them, remarking softly, "Ye mought 's well be er dewin' suthin' 'sides talkin' an' 'arn yer dinner. 'Spose we'll hev ter feed ye 's long 's et rains."

But after dinner the clouds were wrung dry, and although they hung low over the dripping and drenched earth, not a drop of rain escaped.

"I'll come ergin," said the peddler, as with harness on and his kit buckled tightly, he prepared to move on to other markets. "Mebby ye'll want suthin' more——"

"No, ye needn't! I shan't buy anything!" adding in a lower tone, "I've hed 'nough o' ye an' yer stories!"

"Heow kin I git over ter Tumbletown 'thout goin' back ter ther village?" asked the peddler.

"Ye kin go ter ther top o' ther hill—see them trees in er clump?—Wal, ye'll fin' er cart path—Pignut Lane they call et—right threw ther woods by ther Carley mansion ter Little Bigger Hill rud, an' then ye tarn ter ther right an' foller ther rud, an' thar ye be ef ye keep er goin' long 'nough."

"Thank ye, ma'am! I b'lieve I kin dew er good bit o' tradin' over thar! Good day t' ye!"

"Tradin!" muttered Aseneth, as the peddler ambled off in his careful step; "dunno erbeout yer tradin' so much! But ye'll dew er sight o' talkin', thet's sartin! Sech er waggin' tongue goin' at sech er flipperty-flop ev'ry minute! I never set eyes on ye erfore an' I dew

hope I've seen ther las' o' ye! Lor', et'll be er week erfore I git myself all collected tergether ergin! Deary me, ef ye'd come erlong in ther spring erbeout plantin' time an' stan' an' gabble in ther cornfiel', ye'd be er scarecrow wuth hevin' an' payin' fer!"

But how harmless were these exploding words and lingual missiles to the peddler? It is an ill wind that does not blow something good to or from even a deaf peddler. On he trudged to the clump of trees and disappeared in the wood, taking the path in which Wainworth and the reporters had seen an old man led back, probably, to captivity. Following the path, or Pignut Lane, the peddler came at last to a cleared place in which stood the remains of a fine colonial mansion, a square two story house with two story ell in the rear. The outline showed what it had been—one of the more pretentious houses of the old primitive yet aristocratic type—plain, roomy and substantial.

The peddler did not look at the house, apparently, but toiled on slowly—a little slower than usual, with a hitch and a limp as though he had no intention of stopping. When opposite the house on what might have been once the lawn, but now giving place to the encroaching forest and weeds, a man came out of the house, looked at the peddler a moment, and then shouted, "Hullo, there!" But the peddler kept straight on. Again the man shouted, but the peddler held to the way of his going. "The devil!" exclaimed the man; "I'll overhaul you quick!" and he walked briskly after him. Shouting again in a higher key, he at last attracted the peddler's attention. He made a sounding board of his hand and awaited the approach of the black-whiskered man.

"What are you doing here, old man?"

"Hey?"

"What do you want here?"

"Ye'll hev ter lift yer voice er leetle! I'm er gittin' dreffle deef, allus wuss in misty an' moisty weather, an' er gittin' wusser as ol' age claps on to me sharp!" Another man, belonging, probably, to the same dark-faced tribe, came out of the house and approached.

"Where are you going?"

"Hey?"

"Excuse me! So few people pass here, I thought you might have lost your way."

"Wal, no; I hain't lost my way fur's I kin see! I'll tell ye, seein' es heow ye 'pear ter take considruble in'trest in me, an' erperiently kinder edgin' yer eyes up ter my bag 's though ye thought thar mought be chickuns in et, I'll tell ye what I be er dewin' here an' any other place I kin git ter dew et. I be er goin' up an' deown an' roun' here an' yon fer ther public good—ther gin'ral welfare o' the people—pro borem punkin, as ther papers say, an' ergoin' on an' on er givin' ther best bargains for the money ye most ever see. Pins, needles, silk, jewsharps, soap, thimbles, yarn, pocket handkerchers, shoe blackin', gum et cettery—ther finest 'sortment o' ginuine Yankee notions an' sich. Thet's what I be er dewin' here.

"I was put up las' night at ther place called ther Mottle Farm over yender, an' I dew hope I'll never git inter thet woman's claws and clutches ergin. She jest erbeout talked me ter death! I couldn't git in er word easy nowhars an' no way I could manage! Never heered sech er clatter in all my born days! Wal, I tol' 'er I wanted ter git over ter Tumbletown graveyard by er short cut, 'thout goin' back ter ther village, an' she tol' me ter take ther cart path in the woods an' keep on ter ther rud. I say ergin, thet's what I be er dewin' here—er gittin' on 's

fast 's I kin ter 'tend ter my own business. Ef ye've got anything ter say ergin et, let's hev et—lay yer case erfore ther court an' I'll give 'tention immejiate. Lor'," exclaimed the peddler, looking toward the house; "is thar er farm here? Wal, I'm er gittin' blind, tew.

"Why, gentlemun, I've got ther nicest lot o' notions here ye ever put 'fore yer eyes for ladies an' gents. Ef ye don't want nothin' yersel's, let me show 'm ter ther women folks. I hain't sold er thing ter day, 'cause I hed ter stay ter ther Mottle Farm till the rain held up, an' bein' 'bliged ter listun ter thet woman's dreffle talk, I'm erbeout gin eout."

During this delivery one of the men said in an undertone, "Perhaps Hitty 'd like some of his trumpery."

"Come in, old man," said the other; "we'll see what you have!"

Preceded by one of the men and followed by the other, who proved to be Jack and Aleck Carley, the peddler entered the house and was conducted to the kitchen and into the presence of a fair-faced, comely woman, addressed as Hitty, about fifty years of age, leaning upon a crutch and holding in her hand a speaking trumpet. She appeared to be surprised if not startled as the peddler came forward, but she turned eagerly to the inspection of his wares.

Two deaf ones, shouting to each other, made the house ring. Evidently the peddler was not accustomed to the use of speaking trumpets; he roared into Hitty's artificial organ of hearing at the top of his voice, to the great amusement of the spectators. It was apparent that although Hitty was within two miles of Ourtown's general finding stores, where anything from a starboard anchor to a goose yoke might be bought, yet she had had, probably, no opportunity to go forth and buy. With a small

store brought into her kitchen, she selected at her leisure. On the table was a plate of doughnuts and Jack told the peddler to help himself, "to stop his clack and give Hitty a chance to collect her senses."

Hitty bought a large part of the peddler's store of goods, but was disappointed, she said, that he had no dress pattern of warm woolen stuff.

"Ma'am, I don't run ercrost sech er good customer 's ye be ev'ry day. I'm erbliged ter ye! Thar's er pack o' samplin' cards. If ye'll jest pick eout what'll suit ye, I'll git et fer ye an' bring et Sat'd'y week ef I'm let live thet long by ther Tumbletowners. Sech er rabble as them folks be! Why, I got jest erbout one good tooth in my head an' thar's gold in et ter keep et er goin' er while longer. Lor', I jest hardly dare ter open my mouth among them Tumbletowners! They'll hev thet tooth yit! What they can't buy, they'll take 'thout askin' leave. Nex' Sat'd'y I'll bring ther dress pattern ef I kin git roun', an' p'r'aps sooner ef thar's nothin' ter hender, ef ye say so."

Hitty looked to the elder Carley and he nodded. He turned to his brother and remarked, "He says he couldn't get in a word when he was at Mottle's. I'd like to hear what Mrs. Mottle says on the subject. Did you ever hear such a rattler?"

During the trading an unmistakable sound caught the peddler's car—tap-tap-tap, the steady beat—the play of the shoemaker's hammer, driving home the pegs—a distinct, yet distant sound, not in the room overhead, but somewhere in the house or ell or other building joined in construction to the main part. The beekeeper may make uproar at the entrance of the hive and the bees do not hear or heed, but let the beekeeper knock ever so gently on the walls or the cover of the hive, the

whole colony is astir immediately and the sentinels rush out to learn the cause of the disturbance. Perhaps the peddler heard as the bees hear by the sense of touch and contact. The peddler packed his wares and prepared to depart, letting his glib tongue run meanwhile and touching upon bits of gossip and news—merely touching —exposing to view long enough to excite the curiosity of his auditors and then boldly passing to something else quite as interesting. There was method in this mind rambling and feeding the curiosity of the Carleys. The peddler saw from the window that the rain was falling briskly again, but he took up his bag and slung his pack and, followed by Jack and Aleck, went through the hall to the door.

When the door was opened, the peddler drew back, hesitated, looked at his pack and at the sky, from which, evidently, all the plugs had been drawn or the cloud reservoirs had parted, for the rain fell like one broad sheet of water.

"Snum! This looks purty dismal! I lef' my ileskin somewhar, an' ev'rythin' I got'll be jest good fer nothin'! Sat'd'y night, tew! I say, gentlemun, ye hain't got er place ye kin tuck me in till mornin', hev ye? I'll give ther lady er right han'some present, er pay ther cash, whichever ye say! I vum, I wish ye could!"

"Let him stay!" said Aleck. "He's blind and deaf. A tattler like him is crammed full of gossip. I want to hear more about the man he spoke of, that fellow over near Plumbilly Hill. We'll pump him dry! We don't have a chance every day to entertain a whole circus!"

The peddler staid and was glad to stow himself in an easy-going rocker by the fire and make free with the doughnut offering. After the supper, the pumping began. But a pump was as unnecessary as with a full cask

broached with the bung down. The peddler led his hearers from Scraggy Hollow to Tumbledown Flats, from the Devil's Noose and Quaker Gap to Pippin Orchard, from Peep Toad Pond to Monkey Town and Snoozer Bog, and from Chopmist Hill to Starvit 4 Corners, and gave them in detail the events and gossip in each and in all intermediate sections.

"But ther sarciest thing I ever hed played on me was up near Buffernook Run! Thet was ther slickest! I was on ther rud ter Chippewixeter, dreffle hot, dusty day, an' I was dry an' hungry as er summer boarder over ter Sandytown jest arter dinner. I see some fine apples on er tree standin' by ther rudside. But on ther rudside ther warn't none sech's ye'd call fust class, but on t'other side er plenty. They was er rottin' on ther ground an' er dewin' nobody no good. So I gits over ther fence and was er fillin' my pockets with er nice 'sortment when I hears er snap an' er click, an' I vum thar was er man 'beout's ol' an' han'some's I be er pintin' er gun ter me. Sure's pizen, he was er squintin' ercrost thet gun bar'l an' er gittin' his aim.

"'Drap them apples!' says ther man.

"I was took back, I tell ye, but I ain't skeered by no man with er gun, an' I says, 'Sho! Ye needn't be so fighty! If these 'ere apples belong ter ye an' ye'd ruther they'd rot on the groun' 'stid o' keepin' er feller bein' from starvin', why——'

"'Drap them apples!'

"'Why ye ol' savage! What be ye marchin' roun' with er gun fer! Er gun ain't needful! Ef I can't hev any o' thes apples, all ye hev ter dew's ter say so, ye ol'——"

"'Drap them apples! One, two——'

"I drapped 'm. I knowed 'twas some loonatic an'

ther only way ter dew with sech fellers is ter pat 'm on ther back and smooth 'm' deown like er spittin' cat. So I says, says I, 'I don't blame ye fer guardin' sech nice apples, mister, an', b' George! I'd shoot quicker'n ye did. I see by ther way ye coddle thet gun ye're'n ol' han' ter ther business.'

"Thet tickled 'm mighty nice an' he got ter be reel sociable—said he ware in ther army an' ther navy an' did er sight o' fightin' fust an las'. He pinted eout his farm —heow fur he owned this way an' t'other, an' tol' me what fine craps he was er gittin'. He forgot all erbeout ther gun an' stood et up ergin ther barway. Quicker'n lightnin' I grabbed et an' I says, says I, 'Neow, ye ol' sinner, I hev ye! Ther injine o' war be er pintin' in 'tother d'reckshun, an' the argymint hev come dif-runt complected! Git up the tree, shin right up an' shake off'n et some o' ther bestest apples, an' quick, er I'll bore ye full o' holes an' let the daylight look onside o' yer ol' hide! Git started!'

"I see he didn't 'pear ter be much consarned; he jest grinned all over his luther face, an' durn his picter, he snickered. Says I, 'Look 'ere, mister, ye got no chickun when ye tackled me! Git up thet tree!' An' ther ol' scamp jest put his han's on to his knees, bent nigh double an' shouted, 'She ain't loaded!'

"'What, says I, 'ye ol' varmint, ye luther-faced ol' scarecrow, d'ye mean ter say ye've ben er lordin' et over me with er empty gun?'

"I drawed ther ramrod an' let et jingle ter ther bottom o' ther bar'l. Sure's taxes an' int'rest 'twan't loaded. I was purty wrathy, I tell ye, an' I flung ther gun inter ther top o' er tree, whar et staid, an' ther ol' feller hed ter climb ter git et. Then I drawed eout this.

Ye orter seen 'm straighten up an' show ther white o' his eyes! 'Twas wuth er greenback ter see.

"Says I, 'Ye kin go er huntin' an' er shootin' with er'n empty gun er skeerin' innercent people, but this 'ere leetle barker's made fer reel business! I hain't ben in no army an' navy, but I'll let ye know I kin shoot er woodchuck ef I git 'm front o' my wepon. Git up thet tree an' be er hustlin'!'

"'Look 'ere,' says ther ol' chap, "Twan't nothin' but er joke! I jest wanted ter hev er leetle fun with ye! Thet's all! Ye needn't git so——'

"'Ye kin hev all ther fun ye want,' says I, 'an' p'raps er leetle more'n ye bargained fer! Git up thet tre er I'll make er checkerboard o' yer diaframmy.'

"'I can't climb,' says he, er beginning ter dance an' ter git white 'roun ther gills.

"'Yis ye kin! Git onter ther fence an' shin up! Come! I've got ther bead right on thet buckle o' ther right han' 'spender, jest over yer derned weazened gooseheart! One, tew——'

"'Hold on,' says he, er gittin' on ther fence. 'Twas wuth all yer ol' boots an' shoes ter see 'm gitup—er huggin' thet tree an' er scramblin' an' er blowin' an er takin' on in er dreffle way. But he gits up et las' an' ther sweat was er rollin' an' er sprinklin' ther lan' like er good rain.

"'Neow, shake,' says I, an' he shook. I filled my pockets plum' full an' then lef' 'm. He come deown an' stood in ther rud in ther middle o't, lookin arter me. When I got erway erbout er hundred feet, I shouted to 'm an' says, says I, 'Hullo! Thet pistol warn't loaded an' ther hammer's broke.' Ye orter seen 'm then! He jest broke loose, shouted an' sweared terruble, throwed up his arms, danced and stomped, an' then, losin' his

balance, by forty, sot deown in ther rud kerflunk, an' thar I lef' 'm.

"An' ye kin see, gentlemun, this 'ere shootin' iron ain't no good, not er mite. What dew I kerry it fer? 'Cause I kinder need ther pertection o't—er meanderin' up an' deown with sech er lot o' nice things an' this good fer nothin' pistil's good's any fur's et goes, an' long's I 'travel with et, I sha'n't be in no danger o' shootin' myself. An' neow, gentlemun, ef ye kin give me er shake deown fer ther night I'll be thankful t' ye."

Jack Carley took up a candle and bade the peddler follow him. They went through the long hall and up the front stairway to a room on the second floor. Jack placed the candle on a barrel head and retired without a word, locking the door and taking the key. The peddler straightened up, threw back his shoulders and took a view of the room. It was part bed room and part store room. On the high post bedstead was a bag of straw, a bolster of patchwork quilts sadly faded, but not less warm from the absence of color.

The peddler seized the bedstead as though it were a toy cradle and brought the foot of it against the door so carefully locked by his host, bringing it up to the side of the house with a crash. As anticipated, perhaps, the noise of the moving bedstead was heard below. The key rattled in the lock and the door came against the bed. Jack Carley threw his weight and strength against the door and it opened about four inches, for the floor was uneven and a leg of the bed caught against the edge of the warped board.

"What's going on here?" asked Jack, still struggling with the door.

"Hey?"

"What are you up to?"

"O, hullo! I hope I didn't distarb ye er movin' ther bed! Ye see, I'm er kinder skeery erbeout sleepin' in er strange place, an' when I foun' the door locked, thinks I, ef ye've locked me in, tain't more'n fair ter lock ye eout. Of course," chuckled the peddler, "I've got my good an' trusty pistil ter defen' myself with, but I feel er leetle easier in my min' ef ev'rythin's snugged up erfore I go ter bed."

Over the shoulder of Jack appeared the face of Aleck. But they were satisfied, evidently, and went below, Jack muttering, "Well, I'll be d——d! He is a corker!"

The peddler returned the bedstead to its place against the door, making as much noise as possible. He listened for querying footsteps, but heard none. Then he lay down on the bed, not to sleep, but to think and make plans. Without doubt he had made a discovery worth considering and turning over in his mind. He had been alert during the evening to all sights and sounds. Hitty sat with her back to her nephews and he saw only her profile as she bent over her sewing; but the peddler behind his goggles saw her countenance change in sympathy with the lights and shadows of the narrative in spite of her effort to appear stolid and unconcerned; she was not deaf; the peddler was sure of it. Again, the peddler traced the footsteps of Aleck up a stairway several times in the ell to a room that could not be far from the one he now occupied.

The candle had been extinguished. The peddler now took from his pocket a dark lantern with an eye about an inch in diameter and one that could be contracted to a pin head of light. From the bed he took two slats and wedged them between the wall and two legs of the bed so that the door could not be opened until, at least, an uproar was made. Then he explored the room with

the aid of the bull's eye. The two windows of the room were hung with faded, cobwebbed curtains; there were the chimney and a door leading to a closet beside the chimney and between the two rooms. The closet door was locked but awry more than an inch at the bottom and the bolt was nearly out of the slot. With a bed slat the door was sprung enough to release the bolt. The peddler opened the door a little way at a time and threw in the bull's eye light.

Two old coats and a straw hat covered with dust and butternuts on the floor made up the contents. Between the chimney and the partition on either side was a narrow space, leading, probably, to a similar closet on the other side. Through this space, very tight for a man of the peddler's build, he made his way inch by inch. In the other closet he heard the steady tick of a clock, near and yet not near. In the closet on the other side of the chimney were two doors, one opening into the room opposite the one occupied by the peddler, and another door leading, probably, to the ell. This door was bolted by a sliding lock on the peddler's side; it slipped back noiselessly as though it had been in use. But before proceeding in that direction, the door leading into the room opposite must be examined. No light and no sound came from it. Probably no one was within. From what he had observed during the evening, Hitty's room was on the first floor and unless the Carleys were skulking there in the dark, no one was in the room, for the door was out of joint top and bottom and any light would have been visible.

Not knowing what might come from the room, the peddler obtained another bed slat, whittled one end of it and thrust it into the handle of the door past the casing. No one could open it now. He now turned to the other

door, the bolt of which had slipped back so easily. He listened intently, but heard nothing except the measured pacing of the clock, marking off time, which grew louder as the door yielded noiselessly and became ajar. Ah, what was on the other side of that door? What would it lead him into? To the muzzle of a revolver, perhaps, in the hand of Jack Carley. The peddler took from his pocket a revolver and looked at it under the bull's eye; this was not the weapon with broken hammer, but a full-fledged and equipped instrument of defense. In his right hand he grasped the revolver, in the left he held the lantern, and with his foot threw the door open covering the advancing beam of light from the lantern with the revolver.

Ha! Only a closet hung like the others with cast-off clothing. The closet was long and narrow. Anyone who passed through it must brush against the clothing on each side. The peddler examined the old coats, cloaks and dresses and the dust had been brushed from them by someone passing between. So far so good! Now the peddler returned to his room and listened at the door again and at the door of the other room held by the bed slat, but no sound of movement came to his ears. Again he is in the long closet following the tick of the clock, holding his revolver in one hand and the lantern in the other. At length he came to a door, like the others awry at top and bottom, opening into a room in the ell; there was a light in the room, plainly seen after the peddler had passed the two rows of clothing hung on the sides of the closet.

On his hands and knees, the peddler looks into the room through the crack in the door wider at the bottom than at the top and this is what he saw: An old man with white hair so long that it fell on his shoulders and

around his face to his beard; he sat upon a shoemaker's bench, bending over a small book held on his knee and reading by the light of a candle held in one hand. Between the bench and the bed was a large weight of iron evidently, and to this, by a chain around the ankle, the old man was chained.

Hurried footsteps sounded somewhere near, and someone came up the stairway at a bound and into the room, and straight to the closet in which was the peddler, giving the latter just time and no more to retreat behind the old clothing and draw a cloak in front of him. Aleck Carley took from a nail what proved to be a small chain about six feet long with a manacle at each end. This was to allow the old man to go to bed, which he could not do chained as he was when the peddler first saw him. Aleck without a word attached the lighter chain to the old man's ankle and the other to the weight. Aleck retired as quickly as he came and now the coast was clear again and the time for action if there was to be any.

Now should the peddler knock on the door or open it, for it was not locked, as Aleck's movements showed, and walk boldly into the old man's presence? He felt his pulse putting in more strokes than usual, but his hand was steady and he had no fear. He could not see the windows of the room; were they curtained? Could anyone on the outside see the door of the closet or see him if he entered the room? Before he could decide upon action the light in the old man's room went out. And now what could he do? How could he, a stranger, enter a man's room in the dark to hold parley with him? In the dark only the voice would guide, and who might be listening or within hearing. The fact that the old man was bound with such care, that he was compelled to sleep in his chains, had sent several sharp querying thoughts

home to the peddler's brain. There must be some good reason for loading this man with chains and padlocks day and night.

At all events, nothing further was possible that night and the peddler returned to his room, carefully locking all doors through which he had passed. The bed was a torture rack, with knobs in it like cobble stones, fit for heretics and hardened sinners, but not for a weary, inoffensive old peddler plodding the country roads for his scant living. Sleep was slow to respond to tired limbs while the mind is still at work. Blinking in the darkness, and trying to adjust himself to the configurations of the inhospitable bed, the peddler struggled with the new discovery he had made—the fact that the old man was so heavily ironed and so carefully guarded.

Suddenly the peddler sat upright and listened. Yes, there it is again. Someone is on the other side of the chimney and moving slowly and cautiously along. He sprang out, lights his bull's eye and secures his revolver lying under the bolster. It cannot be the old man, for he is chained to a pig of iron too heavy, evidently, for him to carry. There he is nearly past the chimney—the passage is so narrow there that the brushing of the clothing of the person is distinctly audible. The peddler places his ear to the crack of the closet door and his shoulder to the door itself; the door is locked, but if the person now creeping toward the closet door can pass other barriers well bolted and secured, he may have a way to unlock this door. Many thoughts chase each other through the peddler's mind. Is this one of the Carleys coming to make an end of him? after all, perhaps, although he went into closets and explored so easily, yet he might have been discovered unknown to him and now the avenger of what might be called the pledge or bond of

hospitality, for certainly it was a breach of hospitality for the guest to pry and peek unless he had good cause for it —unless the righting of a great wrong demanded it—was on his track and moving up surely to execution.

Now he is at the door, for the butternuts on the floor nearly tripped him up, and he threw out his hands with some force against the door; but now he stands motionless, apparently, for no sound comes except the breathing of the man, which the peddler can hear, for his ear may not be more than a foot or six inches from the place where the man's head ought to be. What is he doing? Ah, he is lighting a match! And now the peddler, looking through the crack in the door, sees that it is the old man and he is without bonds—free as any man. The old man stoops and looks through the aperture; the match burns out and then silence. What is he doing, and what does he want? Breathing low, the peddler stands with his shoulder to the door and waits. Here is an opportunity to see the old man—to learn his history, perhaps, but something holds the peddler back; his resolution is shaken by the facts that present themselves.

At length, so silently that his movements were almost imperceptible, the old man crept back between the chimney and no more was heard of him. The peddler had been hunting the old man, and now the old man was hunting the peddler, and the latter noiselessly barrricaded the door with boxes and a barrel on top to keep them down. If the old man could free himself from his bonds with such ease and pass through bolted doors—bolted on the wrong side for him, why did he not run—run now instead of squeezing through the chimney space—jump a window, dash into the woods and depart?

This thought kept the peddler awake a long time and made him more restless than the cobble stone bed be-

neath him; it held his resolution in check. When the peddler began to question his own motive to find sufficient cause for interference, his ardor weakened, and now the revelation as to the man's freedom was the last straw to break the back of his purpose, much as he regretted it. True it might be that this old man was kept in confinement for his own and others' good, possibly a dangerous lunatic who even now had been ready to fall like a vampire on the Carleys' guest to revel in blood and tickle the seared mind.

It was nearly nine o'clock the next morning when Jack Carley unlocked his side of the door and gave the peddler a surly nod for a morning greeting. The breakfast passed without incident. Owing to the discovery made during the night, the peddler had lost interest, not all, in the welfare of the old man, but it was Sunday, and the rain was still falling. If he was allowed to remain all day, he might as well be in the Carley Mansion as elsewhere, and as nothing was said about his departure, he dozed and nodded by the fire.

In the afternoon a visitor entered without ceremony as though he was one of the family or the owner himself. The peddler was a little disturbed in his mind to see this man with the long, drooping mustache. He stared insolently and suspiciously at the peddler, and Jack in a low voice explained the peddler's presence. As soon as Hitty saw this man, with lips compressed and face set, she left the room abruptly. Jack then introduced the peddler to the Rev. Adrianople Scooper, as he called this villainous looking product of humanity or inhumanity, who came every Sunday to inquire into the spiritual welfare of the family.

Evidently Jack Carley was inspired by some refreshment stronger than shagbark coffee served at dinner.

The visitor whom the Carleys addressed as "Shad" declared in an undertone that if he was expected to concern himself with the spiritual condition of the family, he would like to interview the spirits themselves immediately for he was as dry and parched as a salt cod. The Carleys received this as a great joke and laughed till the tears rolled, first, because they had been interviewing spirits all day, themselves; and, second, because it was evident that they wished to flatter their visitor. Any observing man knows that the toady will laugh himself into hysterics when "an important man" makes a silly speech.

Aleck now lounged to the door of Hitty's room, leaned a moment against it. The peddler was looking into the fire, but he saw Aleck's hand steal behind him, and then he heard the click of the lock. Aleck had locked Hitty in her room and removed the key. The three roysterers now adjourned to the cellar where, Jack said, "some good stuff was on tap," where they remained half an hour, their laughter growing louder as their potations increased. Again they appeared and looking into the kitchen, see that the peddler is asleep, and, unsteady and embracing each other, they cross the yard and enter the side door of the ell.

The peddler aroused himself and looked about. His interest in the old man was returning—his flagging purpose received a spur from the arrival of the man called Shad, or rather the manner of his arrival. He appeared to be the superior officer of the Carleys; he entered unbidden and sternly, as though he had authority, he demands explanation as to the presence of a guest; and Hitty had been locked in her room. Did they distrust her or the peddler? Probably not the peddler; if they had they would bid him stretch his legs toward another

hostelry. Did they fear to trust Hitty with a stranger lest she should impart to him some secret?

As the peddler mused, the bolt grated in the lock and Hitty walked out of her room, looked out of the window toward the ell, but kept back from the window. Another interesting fact! Hitty is locked and bolted in, when, lo! she produces another key and comes forth as though it were a common occurrence! The way was open; if the peddler failed in the bold stroke he had in mind, he might take his pack and his departure. Hitty stood leaning on her crutch looking from the window, and occasionally her swift, sweeping glance took in the peddler, who regarded her attentively, although manifestly unconcerned and staring into the fire. He could not rid his mind of the idea that something impelled Hitty—something was urging her on and yet holding her back.

Whether right or wrong, the peddler decided upon his own action; his pack was where he could snatch it and run, if he fell into a trap of words or thoughts. In a low voice, hardly above a whisper, he asked, "Are you deaf?" Hitty started, bit her lips and looked steadily out of the window. But the question was answered if her lips moved not; she had heard and was trying to decide whether she should acknowledge it or not; the peddler watched her closely; her resolution was not of the flabby kind; it might be slow to take form, but moulded and set right, it was steadfast.

At length Hitty turned to the peddler and asked in a whisper, "Are you deaf?"

"No!"

The expression of her face changed, she grasped her crutch with a little start and the other hand began to tremble. Still watching the ell door, she asked,

"Are you here for-for-something?"

"Yes."

"What?"

The peddler hesitated; he might go too far; but his pack was at hand and his legs in better order than the Carleys suspected; and he was protected by something better than a broken pistol; but he must be cautious.

"Don't be afraid to tell me!" I am a prisoner in this house as much as—as he"—here she pointed to the ell—"and held just like a criminal. I've had no chance to speak to anyone except Aseneth Mottle when she came the other day. I was afraid to tell her anything just then because I was not prepared, and hardly knew how to do it so as not to spoil everything. Aseneth's good and generous and would do anything to help anybody, but—but she's quick tempered and hasty, and don't stop to think sometimes before she does things; and I couldn't make up my mind so quick to tell her what I wanted to. Did you come about him?" and she pointed to the ell again.

"Yes."

Hitty's agitation increased. She went to the door and listened and came back and stood where she could watch the ell door.

"Are you going to get him away?" she asked.

"Yes, if possible, and he ought to go. Will you help?"

"Yes, yes!" she cried excitedly. "But help me—help me to get away too! They know that I'm opposed to what they're doing, they know that I'm suspicious, and if he goes away, they'll think I had something to do with it. I fear for my life if he should go and I be left; I have pleaded for liberty—that man's and mine, for I'm convinced from what I've overheard that some great villainy is at the bottom of it; but they seem to be more

and more brutal; they've threatened to kill me if I lisp a word—Jack has; Aleck does what Jack tells him."

"What are they doing now?"

"I don't know, but whenever this terrible man comes here, especially on Sundays, they go to his room and I think, torment him for their own amusement."

"Who is this old man?"

"I don't know."

"What! Don't know his name?"

"No."

"Is he insane?"

"No."

"What's he here for?"

"I don't know. But as I've told you, I believe there's something wrong—that he is kept here to help some great wrong. When he first came they told me he was crazy and that his friends did not want him to go to an asylum. But after a while I was suspicious and when I made believe I was deaf, I heard things—"

"What did you hear? Somebody is behind all this knavery!" Did you hear the names of persons—"

"No; they talked about Master Dog and Mistress Cat. That's all I've heard. Remember, they are cunning, cruel—Jack and that other man—and will not hesitate to do violence! Be careful! You have villains to deal with!"

But the peddler was not satisfied; his mind could not reconcile certain facts. Like the old man, Hitty could unlock her door and be free at any moment, and yet she was a prisoner. What could be the meaning of it? Moreover, was not Hitty strangely incautious to tell all she had to a person she never saw before. The peddler began to think of his pack and the short cut through

Pignut Lane. But perhaps some clue would come if the Carleys kept out of the way a while longer.

"But why do you tell me all this—a stranger? How do you know?—"

"Because I cannot live longer like this—things have come to such a pass. As I've told you, I've had no chance to speak to any one except Aseneth Mottle. In talking to you I thought if you could not help me, there could be no reason why you should turn against me. I must do something and this is the first opportunity. But when I came out of my room, I did not intend to tell you, of course, what I have, but to ask a favor. I made up my mind to run the risk. You said that you were going to the city for the dress pattern. I have or had a sister in the city, and I was going to ask you to inquire about her, to see if she is living. No letters are allowed to go from this house and none come. This is my sister's address in the city or that was the address the last time I heard from her," and Hitty gave the peddler a slip of paper from her pocket.

"I'll inquire."

"When?"

"Tomorrow!"

"O!"

"Don't you want to send a letter?"

"No! I dare not! My sister might come here and—"

"Well, let her come, the sooner the better! You cannot be kept here against your will. You may be free tomorrow. The law will protect you!"

"I tell you they have threatened to kill me! They are so deep in this villainy, they will go deeper before they will give it up—"

"But you may walk out now—this minute—and escape—"

"No, no! There's something else—there's something else! That man!" she whispered, pointing to the hall. A footfall sounded in the hall, and Hitty, with a finger on her lips, returned quickly to her room, locked the door and removed the key. The peddler's interest was returning at a gallop now. Here was a new feature. If the Carleys and their guest were with the old man who was this man stealing down the front stairs? The front door under the porch opened and closed and footsteps sounded on the porch. Soon after the Carleys and the man Shad appeared in the yard laughing and wiping their eyes. The trio made another visit to the cellar; the man Shad disappeared and the Carleys returned to the kitchen. Hitty's door was unlocked as adroitly as it had been secured—by a sliding back hand movement—and Hitty came forth to prepare supper.

After supper Jack Carley started his pump to drain the peddler of more news and gossip, but the peddler declared that he was so weary that he could hardly keep his eyes open, and this was true. Nothing so taxes the faculties, aye, and the bodily strength, as the acting of a part unnatural. Again, the peddler was locked in his room, and he quickly secured the door by the bedstead, barricaded and wedged it with bedslats. The peddler's interest was mounting up now and driving his mind to many considerations. The events of the day had brought forth much to deepen the plot, but the mystery was deeper, too. What was the "something else" of which Hitty spoke?

The peddler was now determined to communicate with the old man if possible, and again made the passage of the chimney as before, but when he reached the door of his room, no light came through it, and listening at the crack, he heard the deep breathing of the occupant. Re-

turning to his room the peddler noticed what had escaped him when he first entered it. The curtain of the window over the porch had been rolled up and tied. On the night before, the peddler tried the windows and found them fast, but now the window over the porch went up easily. Was the curtain rolled up to accommodate watchful eyes on the outside? And was the window loosened to admit a visitor if there were need, for ingress was easy from the roof of the porch?

The peddler took a comfortable seat on the head of a barrel, lit his pipe and considered all these new features and the possible connection of one with another. The night was dark and the clouds hung low; the rain had ceased and only the drip from the eaves disturbed the quiet of the night. In the west was a faint glimmer of clear sky and the brooding clouds might lift and give the moon, now nearly full, a chance to do its duty. The peddler smoked and waited and looked into the blackness around the house and in the forest beyond. About midnight, the clouds were brushed away by a gentle breeze and the moon looked out and threw her wondrous beams into the yard—the old-time lawn of the colonial mansion. If anything put on legs and made use of them in the lawn or forest edge, the peddler would see it, indistinctly, perhaps, but sufficiently to show presence. He was becoming weary of his vigil when a dark form crossed the yard, the open space around the house, to the edge of the wood and turned and looked up to the peddler's room. It was too dark to distinguish the man's features, but he was not one of the Carleys; they were tall and lank, while this man was short and probably stout or wore clothing that gave him a stubby appearance.

This man then walked slowly to the entrance to the

lane that led into the woods and again looked up, came toward the house and was lost to view. Was he coming to visit the peddler? If so, he would find the peddler in bed, but not asleep. Yes, he was coming; something, probably a ladder, was placed against the porch; someone ascended and stood on the roof of the porch; the peddler could see the form of a man outlined against the moon. The peddler drew the bed clothes over his head, leaving only a peep hole. Now the man on the porch roof threw the flash of a dark lantern into the room onto the bed and onto the form of the peddler. He understood all the arrangements now; if the peddler had not been in his bed, the loosened window would admit his night watchman, for such he must be, and probably this man was the "something else" to which Hitty referred.

The man on the porch satisfied, evidently, that the peddler was where he ought to be, descended, and the peddler, assured that he was safe till morning, fell asleep and did not awake till called to breakfast by a lively tattoo on his chamber door by Jack Carley, who bade him "stir his stumps and waste no time about it."

After breakfast, Hitty bought more of the peddler's wares and gave him the pattern of the dress to be bought in the city and delivered at the end of the week. The peddler asked if he might be allowed to remain over Sunday since the people generally were so loth to entertain a stranger. Hitty looked to Jack for answer. He scowled, swore roundly, called the peddler an "old funk and a nuisance," but condescended at last to nod assent, and the peddler, expressing his gratitude, making Hitty a present for the hospitality shown him, slung his pack and trudged out onto the highway and was soon out of sight on his way to Tumbletown Flats.

CHAPTER XII.

A LULLYICK VICTIM.

The city, or the good (and the bad) people in it, at the mercy of all weathers and the many changes of which they were capable, was in the grip (and getting the worst of it) of violent storm that might have outrun (and not half try) the stoutest equinoctial uprising known to the piled-up imagination of the oldest inhabitant.

Early in the day a burly wind, sauntering leisurely out of the North, growing bolder, as all idlers do, as it advanced and found little opposition, came to town and puffed boldly but mildly (owing to the distance run) to try the temper of the people, and finding them in a snarl and the people themselves full of the cares of life and in no mood to wrestle with new burdens, much less, a jostling and not altogether agreeable wind, blew the harder like a teasing child that receives no attention.

And when the people thrust up their coat collars and retired within them, and had the gross impoliteness to turn their backs to this northern blusterer, and to blow their fingers at him, then he pelted them with hailstones, cut and filed sharp in the home quarry, making every man who dared it and them (the wind and the hail) a toper if judged by the rosy hue of countenance and the nicking scratches on the most prominent member.

But this giant from the North, with so many raw and scowling faces, now turned to him, relented and withdrew the force of flinty prickers and sent the soft rain to heal, blowing more fiercely than before, after the man-

ner of men who put more force into blows if the weapon be soft and yielding. The ways, like the ways of life, were slippery and clogged in places with pitfalls here and there; the upright were no longer so, but came down to a common level unless held up by the accommodating inflexibility of hitch post, lamp stand, or barber's pole. As night drew on and threw the black mantle over everything, street lamps flared up in remonstrance and went out fitfully, and only the illuminated shop windows guided the slipping, sliding, splashing throng, every member of it hastening to snug retreat by cosy fireside.

Away somewhere in the distant part of the city a contrary horse car refused to move and blocked all progress, and a mile of cars waited perforce to buffet the blast and to weep over the impotence of man by a torrent of tears trickling from roof and bonnet; and weary man, with visions ever before him of home, his choice bit of supper and of cheerfulness, rushed into the first car he came to, to sit in content and expectation long enough to pay fare; and, then, exchanging criticisms with a fellow longer for home, on the criminal carelessness of the carrying company, and, speaking boldly of damages and heavy suits at law, resorted to his own powers of locomotion and walked home, bewailing the lost fare and the gain of sodden clothing.

A day of fearful weather for man and beast, ending in a worse night—a night in which to run to cover and stay covered—a night to make any man thankful for the Lord's tender mercies—if they included a safe and dry retreat from the three missiles—wind, rain and hail.

Ralph Markman Paige, eye-opener for the "Open Eye," came out of his headquarters into a broadside of sleet, thankful as he buckled to it and struggled home-

ward, that no call to duty led away from his six o'clock dinner on such a night. The people, even in the slums, ought to have sense enough not to engage in broils and thumping bees when such weather was on parade, and thus arouse the police, and, of course, the reporter, who must follow quick to sum up the damage to heads and property for the benefit of the people who read the papers with slippered foot cosily on the fender; and Paige hoped as he tugged on that Mistress O'Blarney, down in the squatter district, milking her cow, more especially if the cow had much activity in her kicking parts, would be good enough to place the lantern where the flying hoof could not reach it, for great damage had come before now from such high hand or foot proceedings, and much disturbance of regular meal times of reporters; and of all things disagreeable if not dangerous to report on a stormy, wild night, nothing could be more so than a fire with the wind to help it on and keep it going.

Passing the tenth police station, Paige saw Captain Bonny sitting at his desk, writing with one hand and patting his bald spot with the other, and having a half hour before dinner, Paige rushed in upon him.

"Good evening, Captain! Don't let me disturb you! I'm ahead of my dinner time and I'll wait here to let it catch up! This office is cheerful; the fire is bright and this chair is the most accommodating in town! Don't look at me if you are busy! If I can look at you a few minutes, provided, of course, it is agreeable, I'll have a better appetite for dinner!"

The captain grunted in good humor (he was always in good humor) patted the bald spot and went on with his writing. Captain Bonny was every good man's friend, and even the criminal, if he must be brought to book, doubtless, might prefer, if he had the choice, to

take punishment at the hands of Captain Bonny, knowing that he would get his deserts but no more. A large man was the captain—six feet one in his stockings, and turned the scales at two fifty or thereabouts—straight as an elm and as supple, for fifty years of life and activity (in the army and in the police service) had taken only a little tuft from his headpiece, leaving a cleared place about as large as two silver dollars, and packing the inner man snugger by surrounding it with a thicker layer of adipose; his hair, light and streaked with silver, hung over his ears and curled up into little rolls and bobs; he wore gold bowed spectacles to write with and looked over the tops of them at other times; his eyes were large, round, open all the time, and twinkled and beamed under long eyebrows and longer lashes, which he pulled out and used for bookmarks when they fell across his vision; his broad and ruddy face was flanked by stubby side whiskers that bristled up under his curly locks.

Wherever any man, woman or child saw this man and this face—looked into these kind yet keen blue eyes—under any stress of circumstances, even the first time, they knew instinctively, intuitively, that there was nothing to fear or to mislead, but rather much to admire and to trust. Rough and blunt in speech as the captain might be, for he dealt with crime and criminals, yet not a word ever came from his lips that might not be uttered in any presence. He won the respect if not the love of men, not by trimming his sails to accommodate personal puffs and little gusts of prejudice or by coddling men's ideas in the soft cradle of policy. When he put his foot (in a number twelve) down, and, to emphasize, laid his broad hand on the desk before him with such vehemence that the office furniture jumped, he cared not what any man high or low might think of him, provided he was in the right;

and if he stumbled and came to false judgment, no man turned quicker to full and hearty acknowledgment.

The young reporter, timid and faltering (if there ever was such a thing as a timid reporter) at least till acquainted and the country bloom wore off, grew a foot in a night, in his mind, after he ran up against Captain Bonny, realized what he was and might be to him, and received the pledge of good fellowship—a hearty grip of the hand and a vigorous slap on the back. Captain Bonny believed that every scrap of humanity was good (for something) and worthy of his confidence until convinced to the contrary; and if any big or little fleck of the human race did impose upon him and lead him to error, then he, she or it had better make tracks with speed and also with the heel toward the captain.

"That young fellow from the 'Squealer' (a nick name for a city paper) was here a few minutes ago," said the captain, laying down his pen and turning in his revolving chair to face Paige, "and told me how well my new uniform fitted me and predicted that I should be Chief before the end of the year, and then the sly boy opened up and asked me to telegraph to four stations to get the news; and now you come in and talk about dinner and the appetite you expect to find here. Now, Master Paige, what do you want?"

"Captain Bonny, that's an unkind and bitter cut, unworthy of you, every word of it! You know I'm no taffy peddler! You know that when I want anything, I ask for it and make no bids with fine words! I never come to you and say, 'Captain Bonny, how fine you are in your new uniform,' or, 'Captain Bonny, you'll be Chief before the end of the year' (which I hope will never happen) and then come down with a big job in the favor line—"

"Don't take much, Master Paige," laughed the captain, "to set your tongue going! So you don't want me to be Chief, eh?"

"Yes, sir; I don't, and no, sir; I do, because, first, you've said that you do not want to be Chief. You never say what you do not mean; and why should I wish you to have what you do not want? and, second, because if you are made Chief, all the reporters and any others (except the scamps who know they ought to have the lash of the whip of law, and know, also, that they are sure to feel it crack around them sooner or later) will go into mourning for ninety days and not get their eyes in full blinking order on the nintieth day. Every man knows that no man is better qualified to be Chief than Captain Bonny and that he deserves more honor than he's likely to get, owing to the stingy way the top sawyers have of dealing it out. But, Captain Bonny, if you are Chief, they'll carry you off to headquarters, give you a room all to yourself, set you up on a little throne, where we, humble reporters, cannot get at you, except in a formal way, under other eyes, for fear we may have designs upon you. Why, captain, what would they do to us, if, when you are Chief, we should walk in upon you, if we had the chance, slap you on the back, or say, 'Hullo, Bonny, it's time to have another pipe!' or cut off one of those handsome brass buttons on the back of your new coat as that wretched Waxler did? We'd be in the tramp's room, locked up for the night to let our tongues rest and to think up our manners, and be hauled before his majesty the Justice in the morning. But we have your word and you never go back on it. You said you wouldn't take the office. But I must go. A good dinner is only two blocks away and the appetite I spoke of is on hand; and, after that, if a fire or an accident does not

send me galloping, I'm coming back to smoke a pipe or two with you—a little old gold cut in an aged sweet briar—"

A woman in black, heavily veiled, with the stormy litter of the street clinging to her, entered the office and advanced to the railing in front of Captain Bonny's desk.

"As my daughter was passing through Mortor street," said the woman, "she lost her purse. If found by an honest person it might be returned here—" Her voice, tremulous from the first, failed; she clutched the railing in front of her and would have fallen if Paige had not vaulted over the railing and caught her. She had as little weight as a child, and, directed by the captain, Paige carried her to another part of the station and laid her upon a settle while Captain Bonny ran to his locker for restoratives, for faintness had come over the woman and she was unconscious.

When the captain removed the woman's veil, he sprang back with a loud exclamation of surprise, stamped with his right foot as he did always when sudden excitement came upon him, and clenched his hands.

"Call the doctor!" whispered the captain to Paige. "Three doors above!" The woman was about fifty years of age, tall and slender; the face was fair to look upon, but the thin cheeks and the sunken eyes told a pitiful story of deprivation, biting, starving want and suffering —of suffering continued almost up to the verge of yielding. While the doctor worked over the patient, for as yet she showed no sign of returning to the hard life that was hers, apparently, Captain Bonny, unusually excited, paced back and forth between the rooms, now assisting the doctor, now looking at the placid face so frightfully pale and death-like, and now rushing into his office and

ejaculating, "The villain!" "The murderer!" "If I could get my hands on him!"

But at last the patient awoke to dreary existence again and tried to gather strength enough to renew her battle with the storm and return home. Leaving her propped up in an easy chair by the fire, the doctor passed into the office where Captain Bonny was stamping out his rage.

"Do you know that woman?" asked the doctor.

"Know her!" blazed the captain, bringing his huge hand down upon the desk. "Know her? Yes, sir! Do you remember Sidney Latwell, the iron merchant in Garroway street, who died several years ago?"

"Yes, I remember him—a most worthy man!"

"Aye, aye, sir! That lady in the next room is his widow. A nobler woman never lived! Anyone can see that she has come to want!"

"Want?" exclaimed the doctor. "She is starving!"

"What! Starving?" almost shouted the captain, glaring upon the doctor as though he were an offender at the bar of justice, "Sidney Latwell's widow starving and I, Felix Bonny, round and fat and lazy and not half so worthy, have enough and to spare! Here, Paige, run to the Ferry House and order things—tea, toast, anything—and tell that long-legged Jacques, the waiter, to get here quick or I'll have his scalp before I sleep!"

"Why, sir," continued the captain to the doctor as Paige departed on his errand, "when Latwell was in business on Garroway street, I was a patrolman in that part of the city, and when I was injured in a burning building—leg and ribs broken—who sent me a Christmas turkey and presents for my wife and children? Sidney Latwell, sir! And when Mrs. Bonny was down with the fever and at death's door who brought fruit and clothing, flowers, calf's foot jelly and wine whey

and the good Lord only knows what else? Mrs. Latwell, sir, the lady in the next room—heaven bless her—and you say she's starving! Zounds! And I enough! Yes, and who paid the doctor's bill, long as my arm? Sidney Latwell again. He helped me like a brother! God bless his memory! And now his widow is starving and I—" and the captain brushed some falling tears and kicked the office chairs.

On the departure of the doctor, the captain made himself known to Mrs. Latwell and learned her history or that part of it immediately preceding her visit to the station. When Paige and the long-legged Jacques appeared with a full tray of good things sending forth savory odors, and placed it before the famished woman, the captain and Paige retired to the main office.

Captain Bonny was now at a white heat, whereas before the fire of righteous wrath only glowed. "I hope," said Captain Bonny, striding up and shaking his curly locks, "that I may live to see one man get what he deserves! He may escape the hangman's noose, but the jail, the blackest dungeon in it, is the place for him. When I recognized Mrs. Latwell, I thought of him, knowing what he had done. It came to me like a shot that he was responsible for it all. And he was."

"Who is this man?" asked Paige.

"A scoundrel by the name of Lullywick!" replied the captain, savagely.

"What! The Hon. Theodore Lullywick of Gotham street and of Bond street?"

"No, sir! Not the Hon. Theodore Lullywick, but the designing villain, thief and perjurer, Theodore Lullywick! As great a rascal as ever went unpunished. Go and get your dinner and when you come back, I'll tell

you a pretty story—something that'll make your blood tingle!"

"I'll take it right here now, if you are ready! A story of Lullywick may be better than dinner. At all events, I'm ready to swap one for the other and run the risk!"

"What do you know about Lullywick?"

"Well, not much, but something. I want to know all about him I can learn. I'll tell you why when the time comes—tell you all I know any time."

"Several years ago, before Sidney Latwell's death, he, Latwell, helped Lullywick by indorsing his paper. Then Lullywick failed and no one believes that it was an honest failure—it was simply a gouge game. The crash ruined Latwell, made a beggar of him, aye, and really caused his death. Lullywick is now considered one of the rich men of the city, and the widow of the man who stood by him and whom he ruined and beggared is now starving. All that I knew long ago, and while you were out, I learned something that made my flesh creep. With her four children, she lives in one of Lullywick's barns on Ashman street. She hired of an agent and did not know it was Lullywick's till she had been in the place some time, and then had no place to go or money to help her. Lullywick would not stable his horses in that building.

"And that's not all! Mrs. Latwell is now threatened with expulsion on Saturday night if the rent is not paid. They've had a hard time of it. But they'll not want again as long as I've a dollar. Mrs. Latwell has friends by the score; she spent a good part of her time when the world went well with her in helping the poor, and now she's come to this. But that is the kind that suffer. Now, Master Paige, you've lost that dinner and we cannot have that pipe you spoke of. I wish you'd run down to

Ashman street and tell the children that their mother'll be at home before long. They'll be anxious about her. I cannot get away till the lieutenant comes—nearly an hour. Then I'll take Mrs. Latwell home in a carriage call at Ashman street and get the children, and have them all at my house—not another night shall they stay there. I will not eat, drink or sleep till they are cared for!"

Paige hurried away in the blinding storm, glad to be of service in any case to Captain Bonny, and eager for anything that might throw light on a subject that was now looming up in the distance—not very distant, perhaps—in which he and Bruce and others had a growing interest. In Ashman street, the poorest poor of the city were huddled together. Life here might be, probably was, in many cases, the last link between independence—a home such as it was—and the pauper asylum; certainly, living in Ashman street was below the last rung in the ladder—at the bottom—in the dregs.

This overcrowded street, unwashed, full of noisome smells from reeking filth, ran into a great thoroughfare on which was a costly church edifice, the shadow of the spire of which at ebb of day must have fallen athwart the wretched habitations in Ashman street; and while the members of this noble church, and noble it was, and noble is any church erected in the name of God, were sending to the far away heathen a fat roll of money annually, as recorded by the daily press, yet men, women and children, within a stone's throw of their magnificent place of worship, were starving. Think of it, ye missionary enthusiasts! Think of it, benevolent people, whose left hand knoweth full well what the right hand doeth! Think of it, ye gifted preachers, seeking a text, and think of it every one of ye!

The Lullywick block or the Lullywick "barn," as

Captain Bonny called it, without doing violence to the truth, was a three-story, unpainted wooden structure with narrow outlets upon the street—a most wretched dwelling—where low rents (as high as they could be) prevailed and where the good poor and the bad poor and the vicious and the filthy were brought together. When a thin partition separates cleanliness from uncleanliness, concrete or abstract, cleanliness feels the contamination.

Directed by an occupant of the building, Paige found the way to Mrs. Latwell's tenement on the second floor. The door was ajar a foot or more and the light streaming from the room into the hall was the only light in the hall. As Paige approached he heard children's voices pitched in a merry, jubilant key. It occurred to him that shouts of laughter and "joyous proceedings" were out of joint in that place of general wretchedness. How could anyone live there and laugh? And certainly visitors could not laugh at anything seen there. Stay—a poor wretch going to a better home or to his last resting place in the church yard might forget himself and laugh at his good luck at last.

In the center of the room into which Paige now looked stood a little man with shining bald head and wearing gold bowed spectacles; he had a fair round face without whisker propped up by prominent chin with a double buttress under it. Before him was a large hamper—a high-hipped basket large enough for a man to lie in, and out of it the little man was taking package after package. Another man not much larger, but much stouter, was giving his attention to the fire, for it appeared to be contrary, owing, may be, to the dilapidated chimney and lame draft. The fire, feeble and struggling,

appeared to be a curiosity to the three children—a boy of twelve and two girls younger.

The clothing of the children was scant in the extreme; cloths wrapped around the feet served in the place of shoes; their hands were bony, the faces were pinched and in them a hungry, pitiful expression; but this soon disappeared—this wistful, pleading expression—for the little man now produced from his capacious basket what opened the children's eyes still wider and made them dance; a little girl about five years of age having a large red apple in one hand and an orange in the other could do no more than to stare at one and then at the other; the fire was now under way and roared up the chimney, throwing out heat and a cheerful light, for the builder of it, on his knees, had puffed out his cheeks at it and blown upon it with all his power of bellows. Between the fire, now becoming a real, active and warming fire, and the wonderful things still coming out of the basket, the children appeared to be in danger of going wild, the little man tossing to them, now a cloak, and now a tippet, ending this play by throwing a bright new coat over the back of the boy and tying the sleeves under his chin.

Paige had seen all this at a glance and his eyes grew moist, but he must not longer be a spectator without making his presence known. He knocked and the little man came briskly to see what was wanted.

"Yes, sir! Thank you!" he exclaimed after Paige had delivered Captain Bonny's message. "Tell the captain to come to see me tomorrow morning if he can, say about ten o'clock, if you please! Fine man that Bonny! Wish there were more like him. Thank you, sir! Good night!"

Paige hurried back to the station. "Ha!" exclaimed

the captain, "Mr. Geld, Hammat Geld! That's the man you saw, and the man with him was his man Primus—I don't know his other name—the queerest genius you ever saw! What! Don't know Hammat Geld? Well, it's time you did! Want's to see me, eh? He shall! I'll be there on time! He's my superior officer in the charity company, and I obey his orders like a rear rank private. Hammat Geld is a man of a thousand, aye, of ten thousand, aye, more, he's the only man of his kind in the world that I've run up against!

"He's in business in Clinkton avenue—the iron business—and rich as a Jew—a round dozen of jews. A good part of his time and his money, too, is given to the deserving poor. He's no trumpet blower; when he gives a dollar, he don't shout, 'Come and see me give away a dollar!' His name is never in the papers if he can cover his tracks and keep it out. He's a sure-footed Christian if there ever was one, and whenever I see him I am tempted to take him up, give him a hug, and carry him home in my great-coat pocket. Only a few friends —thank God, I'm one of them—know what he's up to, and even they have a hard time of it often trying to find out enough to help him.

"I know what he wants, I think. He's stumbled onto Mrs. Latwell's hard condition, and is going to do something for her. Well, they are provided for temporarily, and if they are as bad off as you say—no clothing to wear—they may not care to go till better provided. I'll take Mrs. Latwell to her children as soon as the lieutenant comes. Meet me here at half-past nine sharp, tomorrow morning, and I'll show you the only man of the kind in the world."

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. HAMMAT GELD SPEAKS HIS MIND.

The next day at ten o'clock sharp, Captain Bonny and Ralph Markman Paige were admitted to the Geld mansion by Primus—serving man, door keeper and general factotum.

"How's Mr. Geld?" asked the captain.

"A little under the weather, sir! He'd better been in bed last night instead of racing round in that storm. But he'll see you, sir, sick or well, and be glad of the chance. He's up to his old tricks," added Primus in a lower voice, as he led the way through the long hall; "gave away yesterday about all there was cooked in the house and a raft of stuff that wasn't cooked. I have to scramble to get a square meal! He'll come to want yet, mark my word! And then who'll give him a cold bite? Not one of them, the ingrates! I don't mean the Widow Latwell—suppose you come about her—but that parcel of beggars and gorgers (if they have the chance) in Bilgewater Lane—all the time nagging and edging up for something and never satisfied, not even with hot coffee three times a day. Blister my neck with a cheese cloth, if I wouldn't send them flying about their business with a broomstick hard upon their rear!"

Mr. Geld greeted his guests with great warmth, leading the captain to his favorite chair, which he said was made expressly for men of stature, of importance and good works. In detail, Mr. Geld recited the history of

Sidney Latwell's downfall as the result of Lullywick's treachery and dishonesty.

"After the death of Mr. Latwell," said Mr. Geld, "the daughter opened a private school and it prospered, for she is as accomplished and talented as she is beautiful. Then a fever prostrated her and then began the struggle that would have ended in Ashman street, if we had not found them. I'm remiss and deserve censure for losing sight of them, for Sidney Latwell, first and last, placed in my hands probably thousands of dollars to be given in charity, and, as you know, captain, Mrs. Latwell went personally among the poor and distributed of her wealth with a liberal hand yet prudently. But the change from wealth to poverty was such a crushing blow, and Mrs. Latwell is so sensitive—who wouldn't be—that we cannot blame them for hiding their distress.

"Now, Captain Bonny, I can find in an hour's time a dozen men, aye, twice that number, who knew Sidney Latwell and held him in the highest esteem, who, if they knew, would not sleep till something was done for his widow—"

"Aye, aye, sir!" exclaimed the captain, slapping his knee, "and there's a hundred dollars to start the pile. You know what they did for me! I'm only paying back what they gave me! And, now, sir, I want them to come to my house this very day—out of that reeking hole."

"Not so fast, my good friend Bonny! They are comfortable now—as comfortable as they can be in that place—and can remain till we find something better. Why, sir, the children have not sufficient clothing to go outside of the building! It would humiliate them to go among even friends in their present condition. Wait a bit, captain! I have in mind a cottage on Elm avenue —thought of it at once! We'll buy it! I know I can

raise the money and shall go right about it! Now let me tell you further about Mrs. Latwell—what she's had to contend with! She did not know that she was in Lullywick's block till sometime after; she hired of an agent, a man named Shadler, who, judging by his appearance, is fitted to do the work of a Lullywick."

"You're right, sir; I know him! He's a low scoundrel!" shouted Captain Bonny.

"In addition to this terrible burden of poverty, they have had something else thrust upon them, and quite as hard to bear. The man by the name of Shadler has heaped insults upon them. He persisted in paying attention to Mary Latwell; he followed her, came to her side in the street and walked with her till she ran from him; and insolently he walked unbidden into their tenement and staid sitting with his hat on till they were nearly distracted, knowing that they were in his power and fearing to offend him. That fellow annoyed them so much that they were compelled to keep the door locked except on rent days and then he must be admitted."

"I'd give a dollar to get my hands on him!" exclaimed Captain Bonny, his face blazing. "I'll speak to the patrolman on that beat! I'll have that fellow jugged yet!"

"It is possible," continued Mr. Geld, "that Lullywick does not know that Mrs. Latwell occupies one of his tenements, or that his agent has threatened to expel her if the rent be not paid. We'll give the devil all the credit is due him. But Mrs. Latwell will soon be beyond the reach of Lullywick or his agent. You've started the ball to rolling, captain, and it will continue to roll!"

"In this business, this is my lieutenant," said the captain, placing his hand on Paige's shoulder, as they arose to depart. "He's interested in Lullywick! Just why, I don't know, but he's going to tell me when the time

comes, he says. I'll send my lieutenant—Lieutenant Paige—down to see you occasionally in this matter, for I can't always choose my own time."

As they passed through the hall on their way out, Primus came out of his niche or cubby under the stairs. "Did you hear that bell jangle a few minutes ago?" asked Primus. "Well, sir, three boozy chaps, probably from Hangman's Alley, called to inform Hammat Geld that they'd been out of fodder for several days, and would drop in their tracks in about a minute if not promptly fed on good hot stuff and plenty of it—the unwashed rascals. There was such an odor of beer and bad whiskey that you'd think a gin mill had been blown up next door. I told them to drop in their tracks or anywhere it suited them, provided it was away from the door where we should not stumble over them in going or coming, and that they'd better wash before they fell in their shambling tracks or the garbage man would take them for common rubbish and tip them on the dump; and when one of them said he'd cut my liver out the first chance he could get, I told them that I had the fire hose hitched to the boiler and the water heated up to twelve hundred and fifty degrees Fahrenheit, and I'd turn it on them if they durst show their grimy necks here again! O, that's the kind of folks I'm waiting on day in and day out altogether too much."

Jamie Latwell was a handsome boy, or had been, and would be again as soon as kind nature, aided by three regular meals a day, plumped out his cheeks and painted them red again. In a new suit and tucked up in a snug reefer warranted, the dealer said, to bring him safe home in any kind of weather, he was acting as office boy in the great headquarters for news—the "Open Eye" office, where he was installed through the influence of Mr.

Paige. This was not exactly in accordance with the idea of Captain Bonny, for he had such respect for his former benefactors that he was hardly satisfied that Jamie should be newspaper errand boy, but the willingness of every member of the family to improve every opportunity to better condition showed, the captain said, "the stuff they were made of." But something better must be found for Jamie, and this was according to Captain Bonny and Mr. Geld, a free run in school.

Four days after Jamie began to run errands for the "Open Eye," he did not appear, and as he would lose his place if not immediately on duty, Paige went to Mr. Geld to learn the cause of his absence.

Primus opened the door about half an inch, first throwing the chain across. "O, it's you, is it!" exclaimed Primus, opening the door wide. "Come in! I have to be careful in these rampant, begging times, or I'll have this hall full of patient waiters—the most patient sitters and waiters you ever saw. That's all they've done or ever will do—just wait like fatted calves for somebody to boost them.

"For more than twenty years," continued Primus, "I've been Hammat Geld's man, and I've had a fine mess of experience. I can tell a bum at sight and am ready to bet my second best hat on it—every time, sir, I can tell them, smell them, size them up in a jiff. Mr. Geld? No, he's out—gone over to the Hole in the Wall to see a man with a broken leg—Hullo, there, what do you want?" exclaimed Primus, running back to the door which he had left ajar, as a large woman with a market basket pushed in.

"Will ye be koind enough, sor," said the woman, "to give this to Misther Gheld, and till 'm 'twor Missus Murphy as lift it for'm wid her compliments an' tin thousan'

good wishes for'm!" and she placed in Primus' hand a bunch of flowers that might have been bought for a half dime at the street corner.

"Hammat Geld'll think more of that," said Primus, as the woman departed, "than of an honorary degree conferred by a university."

Paige hesitated about going to Ashman street, knowing the condition of the family and what it had passed through. Naturally strangers would not be welcome; yes, welcome, of course, but after the siege, visitors were better afar till the effects of the battle were removed; but Jamie would lose his place if he did not appear, and therefore, there was sufficient cause to make inquiry.

Mary Latwell, whom Paige had not seen before, answered his knock. Paige was unprepared for what was now presented to him. Mr. Gould had said that Mary Latwell was "beautiful," but the word beautiful has such common, senseless use—beautiful house, steeple, cow, bonnet, locomotive, bootjack, ship, song—anything—that it conveys little meaning ordinarily. But Mr. Geld had not exaggerated, or he had used the word properly, for if Paige ever saw anything beautiful in this world, he was now in the presence of it. Paige stammered his errand, and, asked to enter, was welcomed cordially by Mrs. Latwell and her daughter. They had heard of him through Mr. Geld and Captain Bonny and Jamie—and Jamie, they feared, was seriously ill. In an hour, Mary Latwell would have gone to the "Open Eye" office to explain his absence.

While Mrs. Latwell was expressing her thankfulness for the part taken by Paige in her discovery, and for his kindness to Jamie, the door opened, and, unannounced, unbidden, a man entered—a tall, broad shouldered man with a slouching figure and a drooping mustache. Paige

jumped—not out of his chair, nor was his jumping perceptible—when he saw this man. His blood tingled and shot into his face, not from present fear or concern, but because many facts now came together, each telling its own story and making a "mass of evidence" to be drawn upon at some future time; here was the man who walked behind the old man in the wood when the Carleys led him away; here was the man who boarded the train at the station below Ourtown when the reporters returned to the city; here was the man whom he and Bruce had traced to the back door of Lullywick's house in Bond street, and here was Mr. Jeremy Shadler, doubtless, for he tallied with the description given of Lullywick's agent by Mr. Geld and Captain Bonny—all these facts coming to Paige in a group gave his thinking powers all they could manage.

Face to face, Mr. Jeremy Shadler appeared even more sinister and repulsive than set forth by the description of him; he lounged in with an insolent leer and a stealthy manner that would make strong men clench their hands and make timid, unprotected women shudder, sat down in a rocking chair, keeping his hat where it ought not to be, and thrusting his hands into his trousers pockets, began to rock to and fro and to stare. The situation was embarrassing; Mrs. Latwell and her daughter appeared to be greatly distressed, but said nothing, sitting in silence. Shadler surveyed Paige from head to foot and back again with that contemptuous sneer that is equal to a verbal insult; Paige returned his stare with interest, but kept his temper.

At last, Shadler sprang to his feet, took an account book from his pocket, turned the pages deliberately, wetting his thumb with his tongue at the turning of every leaf.

"Business is business!" said the Lullywick agent, addressing Mrs. Latwell. "You are informed that this tenement must be vacated on or before Saturday night, and—"

"But Jamie is sick!" replied Mrs. Latwell. "We may not be able to go so soon. We intend to go as soon as—"

"That's neither here nor there, ma'am. My employer must have more reliable and better paying tenants. And," continued Shadler, turning upon Mary Latwell and scowling, "he will not have as tenants persons of doubtful and uncertain character—"

Mr. Jeremy Shadler at the next moment lost his equilibrium; he went down as though a sledge hammer had fallen four stories and hit him in a vulnerable place. Paige followed up the attack, seized the man and tossed him into the hall as though he had been a bundle of rags, and closed the door. Paige's family and school education had taught him home bred and finely spun chivalry. When he sent Shadler down with a stinging blow, it was the thought of his mother and his sisters that nerved him to strike home in the defence of the weak against the strong, the pure against the unclean. Perhaps he had exceeded the bounds of prudence, but it was done and could not be undone. Mrs. Latwell and Mary were evidently troubled by this episode, but they were thankful and said so, not perhaps that a blow had been struck, but that he had defended them. Assuring them that they should not suffer in consequence of his act, if he could prevent it, Paige returned to Mr. Geld's house to tell him what had happened.

"Yes, he's in," said Primus as he admitted him and carefully looked over his shoulder and beyond him, "and he's up to some new scheme! Never saw him so much interested or—or luny—yes, that's the word—for a

long time. Somebody with a pull, I do believe, is stirring him up at short range. O, I think I might as well go out to the poor farm and pick out my room, if they'll let me! We're sure to come to it if somebody or something don't plug up the hole! It's just awful, sir, the way the money runs out! Not by the spigot nor yet by the bung hole, but I'll be drawn and quartered if the head of the barrel is not clean busted and tipped!"

When Mr. Geld heard Paige's story, he danced around the room and pulled up his collar just eleven times. "I'll see that scoundrel Lullywick immediately! Glad of an opportunity to give him a piece—several pieces—of my mind. I'll see him within an hour if he can be found at his place of business! Come around in the afternoon, Mr. Paige, about three, and I'll tell you the result!"

As Paige came down the front stairs, Primus rushed out from his nook behind the staircase. "I say, hold him in, can't you! Hold him in! I don't know what we're coming to—yes, I do, it's the alm house, sure pop! There's a woman from the swamp in the kitchen now with a basket big enough to sleep in, getting the last of that ham and I've had only a taste of it! I'll be withered up and blown away if this is not stopped!"

"Good! Good!" exclaimed Captain Bonny when he heard of Paige's encounter with Shadler. "He won't trouble you; at least, he'll not call on the law to help him! If he comes here, I'll give him a dose that'll be good for him! In this matter leave Mr. Jeremy Shadler to me! But, Paige, keep your eyes peeled! He's a sneak and a backsticker! It's against the law to carry concealed weapons unless you have permission. I give you permission! If Shadler jumps on you, don't wait for a second blow! Let him have it quick!"

Mr. Geld found the Hon. Theodore Lullywick at his desk in Gotham street very busy and occupied as men of large business and property are supposed to be at any time of day. Lullywick's greeting was not cordial and Mr. Geld did not expect cordiality; natural antagonism separated the two men; honor and dishonor will not mix any more than water and oil.

"I called," said Mr. Geld, drawing his chair nearer to Lullywick's desk, "to intercede in behalf of the Widow Latwell, who occupies one of your tenements in Ashman street." At the mention of the name "Latwell," a frown flushed across Lullywick's haggard face, and he settled back in his chair and almost glared at Mr. Geld. "I have reason," continued Mr. Geld, "to be interested in Mrs. Latwell; she is very poor, and her boy has just come down with the fever. I have learned today that Mrs. Latwell has been ordered to vacate the tenement on or before Saturday night. Possibly the boy may be moved by that time, but if not, I thought, if you knew the circumstances, you would not allow your agent to thrust them out—"

"I let my agent manage these matters. I cannot attend to the small details of tenants' wants and doings," replied Lullywick. "I do not consider them proper persons to occupy my tenements!"

"Do you mean to tell me, sir, that you consider Mrs. Sidney Latwell an improper person—not fit to occupy your Ashman street block?"

"I know nothing good or bad of Mrs. Latwell, but I understand that her daughter is a woman of doubtful—"

"Stop there, sir!" shouted Mr. Geld, springing to his feet and standing directly in front of Lullywick's desk. "Not another word, sir! How dare you breathe a word against the name of the daughter on the authority of

that villain Shadler? I understand the whole matter! This low fellow, your agent Shadler, besides insulting and trampling upon the respect of every member of the family, has thrust his attention upon the daughter, and repulsed, as he ought to be by every decent woman, seeks to revenge himself by attacking her good name. As for the daughter, a purer woman, a more devoted daughter and sister does not live! How dare you to speak to her dishonor on such authority? Are you a man—a gentleman? Will you be a party with this foul Shadler to blast her fair name?"

"I shall not interfere with my agent. He has his instructions and will carrry them out. Between us we shall manage to carry on our business without any outside help! I have other matters of more importance to attend to!" and the gentleman of the name of Lullywick made a show of examining papers before him.

"Do I understand that Mrs. Latwell is to be ejected?"

"My agent will give you any further information you may wish."

"Then allow me to say that if you eject Mrs. Latwell as you propose, you will have others to contend with. You cannot compel her to leave without due notice while the rent is paid."

"Ah, indeed!" sneered Lullywick. "I believe she does not pay her rent very regularly!"

"I will tell you, Theodore Lullywick, why she has not paid her rent regularly! I will tell you why she has been reduced to almost starvation! I will tell you why she is now in the power of such men as you and that Shadler. It is because the husband and father, Sidney Latwell, was robbed and ruined and sent to his grave in consequence of the villainy of the Hon. Theodore Lullywick!"

Lullywick sprang from his chair and perhaps intended to make a scene in which indignation and proper wrath would be factors—to order Mr. Geld from his presence or do something to relieve his outraged feelings, for the accomplished trickster is sensitive always and can make great outcry at short notice if his "honor" is impeached; but Lullywick only ground his teeth and stared; he knew what Mr. Geld's standing in the community was; he knew that no man had a wider acquaintance or could summon to his aid in any cause a greater support; therefore, Lullywick wisely held his peace.

"One word more, sir!" said Mr. Geld, leaning over the desk and getting as near to Lullywick as possible, "if you dare to eject Mrs. Latwell or molest her in any way or allow that fellow Shadler to do so, I'll raise a storm that will ring in your ears for the rest of your life. O, thou monster of ingratitude and iniquity! Sidney Latwell befriended you! In return you robbed him—robbed him, I say, and I'll stand by my words—sent him to his grave and now you are maliciously persecuting his widow. Remember what I say! The wrath of heaven will fall upon you, and if what I hear about you, be true, it is not a long way off! Good day!"

Paige was not able to call upon Mr. Geld at three that afternoon, as he intended, owing to the demands of the "Open Eye," but the next morning he was admitted to Mr. Geld's house by Primus, who closed and barred the door with unusual vehemence.

"Look here, Mr. Paige, what's going on! Who's been ruffling Hammat Geld and playing the devil with his temper? He came stamping home yesterday in tantrums mad as two dozen March hares! What's up? But it's a good sign; I'm glad of it. I expect he's been nipped, bamboozled and humbugged, and has just found it out;

it's not the first time and that's the way he acts when a new dodge comes home to him. He's discovered probably that some ready-to-starve family that he's been pouring out the money to has a stiff bank account, a dude son in college, a crack yacht in the harbor, and a villa and niggers by the sea. Break my precious neck when you have time, if a large part of them are not that kind, more or less. Mr. Geld is in, yes, sir; but two chaps from out of town have him in tow, and I don't know how soon they'll let up; not very quick, you may be sure, if there's a chance to get anything. Here, take this chair and wait in comfort! I'll tell you a story.

"This charity business is mighty queer in spots when you come to see the inner workings of it. A while back a charitable society got into good running order to help the poor, by some fine ladies and gentlemen of the uppish kind. 'Twas going to boost the poor most wonderfully, and they hired an office, put in a safe to keep their precious records in and as much cash as could be worried out of the goodies who wanted to see their names in print. A secretary, a nice young man with side whiskers, was found to keep office, the accounts and some of the cash. Although this young man had been out of work a long time and desperate and obliged to depend upon the liberality of a rich aunt for his bread and cheese, he couldn't think of giving his valuable services for less than fifteen hundred dollars a year, but they snubbed him and cut him down to a thousand.

"Even this was pretty fat considering the leanness of the job, and some of the managers wanted a smart young woman, worth two of him, who would be glad of the place for half the money. But they got under way and began to hoist the poor out of their poverty. Of course, Hammat Geld was in for advice and all the money they

could squeeze out of him. Well, sir, knock me flat with a bar of soap, if a few of them didn't manage to get more than the poor the first year. I heard Hammat Geld telling one of his friends. Rent, two hundred dollars; safe, one hundred; postage, printing, stationery, including a spittoon for the secretary, who chewed to brace himself up to his work, another hundred; secretary's salary, one thousand; total, fourteen hundred dollars; they collected twenty-seven hundred dollars in all; so the hard working members got fourteen hundred dollars for the expenses and what the members got amounted to fourteen hundred, and the poor got thirteen hundred.

"Well, that staggered them a little and Hammat Geld and some others let their dander rise a little, but not enough to squelch anything. Then a poor man who'd been poor himself sometime, and who knew nothing about how things were going, gave the society a cool five thousand. He wasn't on the inside, asked no questions, supposing that the blue bloods in the biz were o. k.

"Now saw my leg off twice, if they didn't jump on that five thousand. The secretary just doubled his salary, and more—made it an even twenty-five hundred. The woman who presided at the meetings once a month except July and August, with great dignity, according to the papers, didn't do a blessed thing more, but took five hundred dollars for her services, an even fifty for every dignified preside. There's three thousand told off! Another woman got five hundred for superintending something and racing after poor folks who got to be scarce about this time—that is, the kind of poor folks that they wanted to help—and had to be hunted up and cornered. There's thirty-five hundred told off! Several other members got between them eight hundred dollars for various odd jobs. There's forty-three hundred

dollars told off! Rent, two hundred; printing, postage, stationery and incidentals, including a carriage for the secretary to get home dry in wet weather—of course, a man with a salary of twenty-five hundred dollars ought to ride in bad weather—another hundred. There's forty-six hundred told off. They collected eleven hundred besides the five thousand because the people were getting their peepers open at last. So of the sixty-one hundred dollars, the members and the expenses used up forty-six hundred and the poor got fifteen hundred. If they'd kept on and somebody'd given another lump, they'd doubled salaries all around and the poor'd get nothing.

"But the man who gave the five thousand, when he knew this, lost his temper at the meeting when these facts came out, called them hard names as politely as a man could who was in tantrums and threatened to blow them all to the skies in the papers if they didn't pay back. The dignified presiding officer came to the scratch, that is, came down with the money and left in a hurry, but all the others had spent every cent and couldn't. And then the whole thing toppled, and there's an office to rent, a safe to sell and an accomplished secretary is looking for some charity scheme, probably, that will pan out well."

Mr. Geld became earnest and demonstrative as he gave an account of his visit to Lullywick; but he passed quickly to a pleasanter subject. A cottage in Elm avenue with school house attachment had been bought; there was willing, eager help enough. Merchant acquaintances of Mr. Geld and their wives and daughters, among them Mrs. Apton, the friend of Agnes Canton, were now preparing the cottage for its occupants and in a few days it would be ready to receive them.

CHAPTER XIV.

PAIGE AND THE DEAF PEDDLER.

Ralph Markman Paige and Stanley Bruce occupied a part of an old house—old in age and fashion—in what was once the aristocratic part of the city, respectable, staid and sober yet, but yielding gradually to the blight that comes with the approach of the pestilential saloon which follows or perhaps is a little in advance of encroaching trade and commerce.

Two large sleeping rooms opened into a single room as large as the other two. This was used in common by the reporters, each having his own desk, "working corner" and litter. The wide-awake reporter has always work in hand outside of his regular duties; he is not content with the salary, often meagre, if it can be increased. Paige had already established what he called his "institution"—a weekly letter to country papers; and Bruce was fairly successful in the short story line. Moreover both were steady readers and diligent students. Hence, the large room showed two large pools (running into each other) of books and papers in what Bruce termed "convenient disorder and entanglement." To this haven of rest and comfort the reporters retired after the day's work was done, to write, to study, to read, to talk, and despite the monotony of daily routine, succeeded in extracting from life some enjoyment; and here, also, they smoked when the wind was right and the windows were open—whenever the smoke did not creep down the front stairs and steal into the room of a

boarder with a sharp nose and a sensitive throat, and, also, with a decided and pronounced opinion as to tobacco and the probable hopeless degeneracy of all users of it.

About nine o'clock one morning as Paige was lounging in his easy chair and reading the morning issue of the "Open Eye," a loud knock sounded on the door. "Come in!" said Paige, and again as no headway was made, shouted, "Come in!" In response an old man in a faded yellow coat and some other parts of worn apparel, and wearing blue goggles, stumbled in, catching his foot on the door mat, puffing and blowing like a porpoise. "Don't want anything!" said Paige as soon as he saw the man's black bag and his rusty pack which proclaimed him to be a peddler. But the man proceeded to a chair and laid his pack upon it. "Nothing today!" said Paige again with some impatience.

"Hey?" said the old man, placing his hand to his ear. "Ye'll hev ter speak up er leetle louder! I'm er trifle hard o' hearin', an' er climbin' up them air stairs give me er powerful 'tack o' asmy! Ef ye'll let me set er minute I'll git my breath!"

He found his breath very soon and began to use it. "I've got er purty good 'sortment here," said the peddler in a weak, quavering voice, an' I thought mebby ye'd take suthin' ef ye b'ain't suf'rin' fer ther need o't, jest ter help 'n ol' man erlong—"

"Help you along, indeed! Why, man, this's no place to peddle such stuff where there's stores by the hundred! Bah! Why don't you go into the country where the people have less opportunity to buy? The idea of peddling pins and needles in a city full of stores! Don't bother me! I want nothing!"

"Wal, neow, I got suthin' 'sides pins an' needles.

Don't ye want some pencils? I hear ye're one o' them newspaper fellers thet uses er gret store o' lead ev'ry day—"

"Pencils? I never buy any!"

"What? Ye must hev pencils! Heow ye ergoin' ter git erlong 'thout 'm? Thar's ther finest kind o' pencils in ther world, warranted ter make er blacker mark an' more of 'm'n—"

"I tell you I never buy pencils! If they are scarce around the office, I go to the city hall and skirmish in the aldermen's room, in the council chamber or in any other place where good pencils are waiting. If they do not appear, I go to the state house and rummage. It's a poor day when I can't rake in a half peck of pencils! Buy pencils, indeed! Never!"

"I never see such times's these be," said the peddler, mournfully with an indignant jerk in his voice, "jest seems ef er feller couldn't git'n honest livin' no way he kin manage! Ef I hev er fust class pencil ter sell way low deown, I can't sell 'm 'cause some feller's got er way o' gittin' pencils fer nothin'. Tain't right ther way things is ergoin' on in this 'ere world! Thar's tew leetle regard fer ther consarns an' gin'ral welfare o' ther people by them as 'pears ter hev ther upper han'. Why, I was er tryin' ter sell er paper o' pins ter er woman in ther street back thar, an' I asked her a cent—jest er cent—more'n they be in ther store, an', by granny, she wouldn't hev 'm. Thet 'ere woman want willin' ter pay er cent fer my bringin' er fust class dry goods store right inter her back kitchen! No use er talkin', things is lookin' terrubly doobous, an' wuss an' wuss! Wal, ef ye won't buy, 'spose ye won't! I'll git erlong! But I did someheowever think I'd sell ye er rousin' big lot o' pencils an' dew er nice purty piece o' business, but ye're

so handy er scoopin' things in, 'spose 'tain't no furder use ter argy with ye."

"How do you sell the pencils?"

"Twenty-five cents er dozen!" replied the peddler, brightening up.

"I want no pencils, but here's a quarter. You're welcome! Sorry you're having such a hard time! But I advise you to take to the country and not attempt to peddle at the store door."

The peddler was ready to depart; his hand was on the door knob and he turned to thank Paige for his generosity. Then he closed the door, sat down, took off his hat, which he had worn during his visit, removed his wig and a large part of his whiskers.

Paige jumped out of his chair, shouting, "You, O, you imposter, you! Give me that quarter, Stanley Bruce!" Then Paige sat down again, gasped and stared. "Bruce, what are you up to? What masquerade, show, circus have you joined? What's the name of the troup you belong to? Are you end man, middle man or what? Where have you been performing?"

"In Ourtown! Up and down! At the Mottle Farm and at the Carley mansion!"

"O, I begin to get a glimpse! Have you been on the track of the old man we saw in the woods?" exclaimed Paige, springing to his feet.

"Yes!"

"O, I might have known you'd stretch your long legs in that direction after what happened on that day! But why did you slip away without a word?"

"Because that's my way—to test things before I go ahead. When I set out I had no good reason for interfering in what, apparently, was none of my business. If

I found nothing, then no one would know. But I should tell you, of course, in the end."

"Then you found something—some reason for interfering?"

"Yes!"

"On that day, you said you saw something. Have you proved that you saw aright, whatever it was?"

"Not exactly, but I have found nothing to disprove it. I have learned, however, some facts that strengthen my belief in what came to me that day. But let me give you the story of my travels."

At the conclusion of Bruce's narrative, Paige was on his feet again and enthusiastic for immediate action. "I'm with you to the last, Stanley. Tell me where I can lift—what I can do to help round up the rascals. I want to be in it—in the thickest of it! I've read of similar things, but to find such villainous streaks in mankind in real life is new and startling. O, give me one end of the drag net and I'll pull with all my might. If sign boards do not point in the wrong direction, a fine mess of fish —rather barnacles and octopi—will be caught in its meshes. But, Stanley, are you not ready to tell me what you saw that day—what struck you dumb, stirred your soul and wracked your body?"

"Yes, I'll tell you, but let not a word escape till it is proved to be true."

When Paige heard what the reader will learn in good time, he began to walk up and down excitedly, hardly able to contain himself. "O, if that be true, Stanley! What villainy—what brutality is coming to light. I've never had a hand in anything so interesting—in anything so foul and rotten with crime, apparently! Let us strike at once and see the end of it! If you saw what you think you did—"

"I did see it! Read that!" and Bruce produced the note taken by Plym from under the door of the ell of the Carley Mansion when he swung down by the tree. Paige was speechless. He climbed onto his table, sat down like a Turk with his legs under him and read the note over and over; meanwhile Bruce gave a full account of Plym's discoveries and how he made them.

"Plym's errand to town was to tell me all this. I said nothing to you about it when he was here and dined with us for this reason: When a man assumes an unnatural part, he is, I imagine, judging from my experience, in constant fear of detection, if anything to his disadvantage may result from discovery. Before I told you anything, I wished to test this disguise. I do not think anyone in Ourtown has any suspicion, but I'd be more at ease when I return to the Carley Farm, if I discovered, if I did, that you could not see through it; if it appeared natural to you, a stranger, probably, would not see anything amiss."

"See through it!" laughed Paige. "Impossible! I've never seen anything of the kind so well done! Your blowing and hard breathing and your talk about the 'asmy' was simply perfect. No wonder you adopted the Yankee dialect! Ever since I knew you, you've been practicing it and writing dialect stories. Now, the time's come to tell Captain Bonny and Mr. Geld—how his eyes will snap to hear it—and Primus—you must know Primus! You must put him in your book—that society novel you are writing—if you don't I shall put him in mine. He must be set up and framed somewhere. But when do we march on the Carleys?"

"Next Saturday. On Sunday morning or Monday morning, we shall attempt the old man's release. Now, I want you and Wainworth to explore that old road they

call Pignut Lane and make sure of your way so that you can drive there in the dark to take the old man, Hitty and me. Plym could show you and he's the man for the business, but I have other work for him. You see the note from the Carley prisoner, as he may be called, closes with this: 'If you will help me, kick the door three times.' Plym kicked the door three times and will make another visit to that door before Saturday, if possible, and warn him of his intended release. Now, to Captain Bonny. As you say, it's time he knew all. If I mistake not, he'll have both hands in it—not in the rescue of the prisoner, but in what may follow later. There's rich criminal picking for somebody!"

Captain Bonny listened to the story attentively, his interest mounting up as Bruce proceeded and interrupted with many exclamations of approval and wonder. He smote the table vigorously and shook his curly locks when some names were mentioned. He entered into the case with more than usual enthusiasm and gave the reporters good council with the promise of his hearty support. Then they called at Mr. Geld's house.

"O, yes, he's in," said Primus, "but he's busy just now. Take a seat. A man's tackled him for something —I can't find out what—but I'll collar him when he comes down. Hammat Geld had a dreadful bad turn yesterday—"

"What! Mr. Geld ill? What was the—"

"—Or, perhaps, I might say, a good turn, an eye opener, a genuine head splitter, an earthquake shock, so to speak! If he'd have one every day, a long row of them a quaking and shocking right straight along one after the other, he'd begin to see things and take another double hitch around his pocketbook. But strangle me with the clothes line, if some fellow won't get hold of him after a

grand flare up and a flunk down and smooth him off before another blow hits him.

"I'll tell you about it, for I expect that that man who's with him now—looked like one of them hungry fellows from the missionary jungle—will stay till he gets what he wants if he has to take Hammat Geld by the neck. Well, two years ago, at the "earnest solicitation," as they call it, of a parcel of grannies who are mighty generous and charitable and all that, if somebody else pays the bills, persuaded Mr. Geld and some others to establish a—a retreat—that's what they called it—where poor work women with their young children could spend the summer or a part of it and have a good comfortable time.

"Well, gentlemen, knock me straight, if they didn't find out at the close of the last season that out of sixty inmates of the home or retreat, only eleven had any right there. Hang me up by my heels if there wasn't one woman there—a teacher—who had a salary of nine hundred dollars a year and no one to look out for except herself; and starve me alive, if there wasn't a woman there with three children whose husband and son had gone to Europe on a fast steamer in the first cabin for their health. Of course they could do it after the rest of the family was comfortably provided for in a charity house. Good!" exclaimed Primus as Mr. Geld's visitor departed, "he didn't get what he wanted; I know by the looks of him! Three cheers! Hammat Geld is coming round to his senses! It's time!"

Mr. Geld listened with eager interest to Bruce's recital of the story of the Carley prisoner as far as he knew it. When he learned that Mr. Jeremy Shadler had a hand in it, he became warm and demonstrative.

"It is some of Lullywick's treachery, I believe! The infamous man! Has he not done enough! I hope I

may live to see justice done to that man! It's evident that somebody is playing a desperate game, and there's danger to anyone who interferes. But if you cannot get that man away quietly by strategy—the best way, if it will work—then we'll make common cause and try some other way. Make your plans to bring that man here. I'll take care of him and glad of the chance. Now that he's linked with Lullywick, as he must be, if that man Shadler is connected with it, and if what the note says is true, I'm eager to hear the man's story. I begin to feel that some great wrong has been done. Let us get to the bottom of it at any cost, and, then, perhaps, justice may be dealt out to those who deserve it. Call on me for any help, and don't forget to plan to bring the man here.

"And now," continued Mr. Geld, "I must tell you about our friend Mrs. Latwell. She's out of Ashman street in her own cottage, Elm Cottage, they call it, on Elm avenue. I've never had to do with anything that gave me more satisfaction! I knew that there would be no lack of assistance when the facts were known. There were thirty or more ladies interested in it; they gave Mrs. Latwell a deed of the house furnished from attic to cellar. Anyone not acquainted with the circumstances might think that these benevolent ladies had exceeded the bounds of moderation, and the enemy of systematic charity might say that they had found a pet and lavished more than was necessary. But it must be remembered that this was a gift not only to a needy woman, but to one who had spent years of her life among the poor and in giving to the poor.

"I wish you could have seen the cottage when it was ready. Every room furnished; flowering plants in the windows; in the dining room, a little cubby of a place,

the table was set and the plates turned with their faces down; in the cellar the bins were full of fuel; in the larder was all a housekeeper needs to begin with; the range was humming and the teakettle singing. Well, I told Mrs. Latwell a place had been found, and that I would call for her and the children in an hour. My man Primus had been to the cottage all the morning getting things in order and warmed up. We drove up to the cottage and I asked Mrs. Latwell to look at it, and she said, 'Mr. Geld, I'm afraid this is too high priced for us.' 'But, ma'am, it will do no harm to look at it; come in, all of you!' I led them into the sitting room, where there was a fire in the open grate and into which came the sun most cheerfully. Then I handed her the deed of the cottage and a roll of money and told her that the cottage and all in it was a gift from her friends in recognition of service in the interest of the city poor. Then I left. I've called since, and a happier family I don't know. You must call, Mr. Paige, since your encounter with that rascal, Shadler, they have much interest in you. There is a school room attached to the cottage and already pupils are coming in and more are promised. There are some compensations in life after all, and a good deal has come to me in helping to do what has been done for Mrs. Latwell."

As Paige and Bruce descended to the lower hall they found Primus in his shirt sleeves, holding his coat at arm's length and brushing it vigorously. His eyes were open a little wider than usual, his face glowed and perspiration appeared. Apparently he had been in conflict or contact with something or somebody.

"Dash my unlucky stars, if we didn't have a lively time! But I boarded the whole crew, stood on the stomachs of two of them and took three turns in the Lancers

on each! O, I did lay into them. Four bloated rascals said they'd most pressing business with Hammat Geld and they would see him at once. I told them I rather guess not—not this once or any other once if I knew it, that I knew them, every one, and could smell them a half a mile with the wind in the wrong direction, and that I'd sweep the gutter clean with them if they didn't cut stick and be off before I got my fighting muscles bunched up.

"One of them said something about breaking my neck in less than a minute. Then I pitched in! When you go out, if you see parts of four men lying around promiscuous—a leg here and an arm there—don't pay any attention to them—don't attempt to patch them up, or to find the right leg or arm for this or that body; they'll come to by and by and sort themselves out. If they get a wrong leg again, it don't matter, as they are not likely to use them for any purpose except bumming and beating. If there's any trace of them left after a reasonable time to piece themselves out again, I'll train my double, breech-loading nozzle hot water hose on them! That'll stir them up!

"That nozzle, gentlemen, is an invention of my own. Every charity institution ought to have one and really is not safe without one. If I was not so busy fighting for Hammat Geld and standing between him and an army of suckers, I'd get out and procure a patent on that nozzle. It's great! There's many a chap coming this way who has no fear of the ordinary hose, even the hot water douser, because he is so incrusted with dirt—it is packed on so thick that a four horse-power stream can't fetch him unless its heated up to a thousand degrees and sent home a while. You know what the sand blast principle is. Well, my idea is the same. In the breech

of the nozzle is a pocket that'll hold half a pint of split peas. As the water rushes in, it takes along with it the peas, and when their sharp edges get in their work on the man's hide, he realizes that he's fooling with no gentle garden stream, but with something that must remind him of carpet tacks with their points all aiming his way. The peas just plow right through the mud and get at the man before he can get around the corner; and they do play the very devil with the skin beneath. I couldn't run this establishment without my new hose, a barrel of split peas and a boiler full of water heated up above boiling.

"But, look here, Mr. Paige, if you see any chance, and you must, for you appear to have a deal of business with Hammat Geld nowadays, all of which I have not been let into yet—I say, if you have a chance, clap on the brakes and bear down hard, for he'll get over the little flurry over that work woman's retreat, and then the money'll begin to rattle out again in a steady stream. Clap on the brakes as often as you can, Mr. Paige, clap on the brakes!"

CHAPTER XV.

PLYM'S STRATEGY.

Plym returned from his visit to the city with a light heart, a firm step and his opinion of himself, never very high, much improved. He was relieved; he had carried a burden ever since the slip of white paper came into his possession; he was not accustomed to secrets, and had no art in their handling or covering up; he was oppressed by the knowledge, true or not, given him by the note, and must share it with someone and shift a part of the weight.

Plym was politic and wise far beyond the estimate of those who knew him intimately. If he told his aunt about the paper, then must follow the minute details —all the events that led up to the swing from the tree. He knew what the result might be; his aunt might order up Sandy and set out immediately for the Carley Farm to take the Carleys by the ears and demand the liberation of the prisoner, for, straightforward and thoroughly honest herself, she imagined others might be if the way was pointed out. Let it not be inferred that Plym entertained any inferior idea of his aunt; on the contrary, she was his ideal of true worth in a woman; but he knew that the best people in the world might be the worst in some circumstances.

The first time Bruce appeared at the Mottle Farm, as already recorded, Plym found much to admire in "that big black feller," and to whom else could he give his secret for safe keeping and go for council in the matter?

Moreover, he had discovered that both Bruce and Paige were interested in the Carley Farm or what went on there, or if he had not really found it out, he suspected it from the way, the guarded way, they made inquiries. He, Plym, had found Bruce in his "den," and was received as he retold a dozen times, "je-je-jest like er gen-gentlemun!" He dined with Bruce and Paige, and was shown the wonders of the city hall, the state house and other public buildings; and in the afternoon went to a crack theatre, where, according to his own account, he enjoyed himself so much that he forgot to stutter and could talk almost as well as any other man; and Plym declared solemnly to his uncle as they were sitting at the supper table, that the best way to stop a stutter was to go to the theatre—"a real good theatre"—and laugh; his aunt, however, had a contrary opinion on the subject, having decided objection to theatres on moral grounds, and maintained with usual boldness of speech that it were better for Plym to stutter all his life than to trust his conscience in a theatre.

Therefore, it is not surprising that Plym with these attentions and honors thrust upon him the first time in a humdrum life, should return to Ourtown in good humor with the world in general and with Plympton Hanker in particular. Another fact lifted Plym up to the skies. As he had shown his confidence in Bruce by committing to him the great secret, Bruce could do no less than to return the compliment and disclose the identity of the old peddler.

Plym's eyes were wide as cart wheels and he grew hot as a glowing coal with mortification, for he remembered what he had said about him in his presence, supposing him to be forever lost in a slough of deafness, and he tried to stutter an apology, but Bruce laughed at

him and bade him not tell his uncle or aunt as he intended to travel that way on the following Friday and stay over night if hospitality was gracious.

Plym had now all his mind could master. Life was beginning to have some charm; after all, he, Plym, was somebody, and people were just beginning to find it out; he sang and whistled while at work and he was diligent beyond all habit and precedent. Archelaus and Aseneth commended as Silas Binn praised his only son; Silas made him dance under the birch twice a day, but when the boy was more dutiful than usual, one thrashing was omitted. Uncle Archelaus and Aunt Aseneth scolded still, but with less severity—in a half hearted way as though they did not mean it, and with an intonation of voice that suggested almost faint praise.

That was natural; the nagger and whipper-in, once settled and fitted into nagging moods and grooves, must continue to twist the tongue into pin-sticking speech even if there be little or no cause for it; life to a nagger with nothing to nag and to pester is like bread with no butter or marmalade on it.

"The best remedy in a persistent, protracted case of nagging in a man," said Bushrod Broadaxe, the oracular shoemaker, "is the spiked toe of my best kip No. 10 boot, and in a woman—well, it's a pity, a great pity, sir, that the ducking stool is not in use! If I was in the legislature—but what's the use of talking!" Certainly there was no use in his talking, but much wisdom in holding his tongue, as he knew by experience, for Mrs. Bushrod Broadaxe believed in sadirons and boiler sticks as implements designed for the correction and proper bringing to their senses of men—one man in particular—who have too many protruding ideas of their own.

Plym's mind was now crowded with important inter-

ests and ideas of impending events; and the gray matter was struggling to contain itself and master all the details. It was now Wednesday and the crowning event was to be "pulled off," according to slang phraseology, on the following Sunday or Monday, as circumstances aided. The old peddler was coming on Friday night, and Plym danced and threw up his hat when he thought of it, if no one was nigh, for he saw in prospect what might be as entertaining as the play in the theatre; he knew that his aunt had not a very high opinion of the peddler, and there was likely to be much animated sparring between them.

Before the peddler came, however, Plym must communicate with the Carley prisoner and with Hitty, if possible; there might be many a slip in a game like this, and any move or skirmish in advance of the final engagement, might disclose the strength or weakness of the enemy. Since Plym swung down from the tree, he had been in the woods early every day with Stump and his gun, but not always hunting. He had approached the Carley Mansion on all sides, laid flat in spoon wood cradles or perched in thick leaved trees for hours watching the house and the movements around it, and waiting for some sign that showed the way clear and open to quick travel to the swinging tree and to the ell.

But up to Thursday afternoon, he had made no headway; he was in despair; something must be done, and done quickly. After dinner on Thursday, his aunt sent him to the village; he carried his fishing rod and basket, the gift of the consumptive boarder, and with Stump following, went on his errand. He had no intention of fishing, but he intended, after doing the errand, to return by way of the Carley Farm, and he must have some excuse, apparent without asking, for being in the

neighborhood. He passed the pompous Tallyho in the village street, in a white vest and pumps, who did not deign to notice him. At his heels tagged young Harold Tallyho. When at a safe distance and in the lee of the great hulking body of the senior Tallyho, young Tallyho turned and looked at Plym and applied his fingers to his nose. Plym shook his fist at him and grumbled, "I-I'll gi-give ye somethin' wuss'n pep-peppers when I-I ketch ye wa-way from yer d-dad!"

As Plym came out of the post office, he saw Jack Carley enter Jim Lambert's saloon, a low groggery suffered to exist by a man, a pillar in Tallyho's church, whose influence might have removed it. Now was Plym's opportunity, possible, at least. Jack was out of the way, and as his thirst according to report was great—not like a little dab of paper on fire, but rather like a hayrick blazing up—time would be required to quench it. Plym turned up the Hardscrabble Road that led through Ragweed Swamp, up Little Bigger Hill past the Carley Farm. When half way up the hill, Plym met two cows. It was the Carley boneyard out for an airing; they, or it, had escaped from the barn yard and possibly were looking for breakfast. When the cows saw Plym they turned and went the other way. Something dawned upon Plym as he followed on, and he kicked the roadside brush in his disappointment.

"Wh-what er f-fool I—I be! Ef I—I'd er je-jest g-got over t-ther wa-wall an' let'm g-go b-by, I—I'd t-tell Aleck, an' while he wa-was er git-git'm b-back, I—I'd swi-swing d-deown! Bu-but hold on! Ji-jiminy! T-they ai'nt er go-goin' ter t-turn in! Goo-goody! Goo-good fer ye, ye ol' per-perambu-bu-latin' b-bag o' b-bones! Kee-keep right on!"

Plym slackened his pace and sat down on a roadside

boulder. When the cows were far enough away, he ran on into the lane and up to the house and knocked impatiently. Aleck appeared and Plym struggled with his stutter.

"Yer-yer keows be er run-runnin' er way—er t-travelin' li-lively over ter Bull-Bullrab-bab-le Cor-Corner! I —I see'm as I—I was er co-comin' u-pup ther rud! T-thought ye mi-might like t-ter know, so c-c-come ter t-t-tell ye!"

Aleck said nothing, but his scowl relaxed a little as he went with Plym out to the road. They could see the cows climbing the hill and going on at a good pace.

"Why didn't you head 'em off?" asked Aleck.

"He-head'm off? 'Cause t-they wa-was way he-head o' me! He-heow could I—I he-head'm off, I—I'd like ter know?"

"Well, you might have run around 'em!"

" 'Spo-'spose I—I mought ef-ef I—I hed wi-wings ter he-hel-up me. Bu-but I—I b-b'aint han-hankerin' fer er race with t-tew sech lo-long legged skil-skiletons! T-they k-kin run je-jest like tew c-cats, not hevin' anythin' t-ter car-carry 'cept er f-few bones an' er raw-raw hi-hide er go-good d-deal tew large f-fer'em!"

Aleck hesitated, scowling upon Plym meanwhile and looking first at the retreating cows and then toward the village, and Plym knew why he hesitated.

"Run round 'em, Plym! 'Twont take you five minutes! That's a good fellow! Come! I'll do as much for you sometime!"

"Wi-will ye let m-me see ther d-dog ye-ve g-got in the ell t-thar?"

"Yes, of course, I will when I get him trained."

"Ef-ef ye'll let m-me s-see'm n-neow, I-I'll gi-git ther k-keows fer ye."

"Can't do it now, Plym! But soon's he's trained, I'll go hunting with you! Come, hurry up! Run around them, Plym! You might as well do that as anything! You don't do anything but loaf around!"

Perhaps Aleck did not intend to call Plym a loafer, but it nettled Plym to be thus described by such an accomplished shirk as he believed Aleck Carey to be.

"Ye g-go ter shucks! I—I aint er lo-loafin', an' wh-what ef I-I be er lo-loafin'? Wh-what biz ye g-got po-pokin' yer nose in, I-I wanter know! 'Cor-'cordin' ter all 'cou-'count the only t-trade ye ever wor-worked at wa-was lo-loafin', yerself! Ru-run arter yer o-own b-bone yerd! I-I wo-would'nt b-be s-seen in the s-same lot with them ol' pelts, fer I-I'd b-be er 'fraid o' b-bein' 'rested fer cru-cruelty ter an-animals fer let-lettin'm live 'nuther minute—fer n-not er put-puttin'm eout o' ther mis'ry. Ef-ef ye 'spect t-them k-keows ter wa-walk hum ergin, ye'd bet-better g-git arter'm, quick! Ef-ef they g-go much fur-furder, ye'll hev ter gi-git eout yer fa-fast three leg-legged n-nag with er-er ringbone, t-tew spav-spavins an' ther he-heaves, an' t-tote'm hum on ther st-stun drag! I-I t-tell ye, Aleck, t-them 'ere k-keows hev je-jest g-gone d-deown ter Bull-Bullrab-bab-le Cor-Corner ter find er n-nice, t-tidy place t-ter d-die in! I-I je-jest know it! Wa-wal, I-I've told ye yer all woo-wool Jer-Jerseys b-be er ki-kitin' off, an' ef ye wa-wanter let'm g-go, t-tain't noth-nothin' ter m-me," and Plym started down the road in the direction the cows had taken. Aleck followed, looking toward the house and toward the village. They walked in silence together till they came to a path that led to Tickling Brook and Butterfly Pond. Into this path Plym turned, walking slowly, lazily and Aleck kept on up the hill in search of the cows.

The novice coming upon the jack rabbit on the plains may imagine that jack is just recovering from a severe attack of the rheumatism, for he hobbles on three legs and appears to be lame in every joint; and the stranger to jack's ways may think that he can easily lay his hand upon him. Lo! there is a twist, a jerk, a yellow streak and jack is out of sight. Thus Plym, as soon as out of sight of Aleck, plunged into the wood and ran back to the house like a jack rabbit pursued; he crept out to the roadside again and saw Aleck toiling up the hill, and in the other direction no one was in sight—no sight of Jack Carley; his thirst was not half quenched yet.

Now for a swing down! Plym saw Hitty at the kitchen window, but he cares not for her knowledge of him, now; he ran around the ell, dropping his rod and basket as he ran, climbs the tree and swings down in less time than it takes to tell it; through the roof he went, down into the attic and the room below it and is in front of the barred and cobwebbed door. He kicked three times and listened. Yes, there is a movement within. Plym took from his pocket a folded paper and thrust it under the door. The note disappeared quickly, and then followed three knocks on the door; the note was short and the old man had time to read it. Plym kicked the door as a parting salute and is out in the yard again.

Plym went to the roadside cautiously, but no one was in sight in either direction. Elated, jubilant, he rushed back to the house and into the presence of the astonished Hitty, who is frying doughnuts. He stood within a foot of her and whispered, for he had heard from Bruce about the third man—the midnight guard.

"I-I know ye aint d-deef, 'cause t-ther ped-peddler

told m-me! D-d-don't ye b-be scart! I-I know wh-what's er goin' on!"

"Be careful! Aleck's here!"

"N-no he aint! T-ther k-keows hev sk-skedaddled, an' he's arter'm! Gi-give m-me er d-doughnut, wi-will ye? I-I k-kin t-talk fas-faster with my mouth fu-full! I-I d-don't stut-stut—Great Hickory!—I-I don't stut-stut-her so much when I-I'm eatin'. T-her ped-peddler told me t-ter t-tell ye he's f-found yer sis-sister live an' hustlin' an' er lo-longin' ter see ye, an' he told m-me t-ter t-tell ye," continued Plym, taking another doughnut from the half peck on the table, "thet he's er goin' t-ter gi-git ther ol' man an' ye er way from here nex' Sat-Sat'dy—I-I mean Sun-Sunday er Mond'y m-mornin'! He-he'll t-tell ye all erbeout et, when he comes e-ef he gi-gits er chance, b-but ef thar sh-should be no chance t-ter sp-speak ter ye, ye're t-ter d-dew what I-I s-say—"

"Run out to the road and look!" said Hitty in a whisper. "I fear—"

Plym was out like a shot and back again. "N-not er soul t-ter be s-seen! Hokey! I-I je-jest know Aleck's hed t-ter st-stop ter b-bury them k-keows! Mis' Hi-Hitty, wh-whare's thet m-man thet'a er p-prowlin' roun' o' nights?" Hitty pointed overhead.

"S-sleep?"

Hitty nodded.

"I-s he er wa-watchin' ev'ry ni-night?"

"Yes."

"We-we'll fix him! D-don't ye gi-git scart, n-now! When t-ther clock st-strikes one wh-whichever night 'tis-t-ther ped-peddler'll let ye know some-someway when he gi-gits here—ye m-must c-come ter t-ther d-door, wh-whichever d-door ye say, an' I-I'll meet ye an'

t-take yer car-carpet b-bag er wh-whatever ye hev, an' g-go with ye inter t-ther woo-woods—"

"O, Plym, run out once more—"

"Y-yis," said Plym as he came back, "Aleck's er co-comin', b-but mi-high-ty slow! I-I d-don't b-b'lieve t-them k-keows'll live t-ter gi-git here! He'll hev t-ter b-bury'm yit!"

"The doors are all locked," said Hitty, "and they put the keys in their pockets; and all the windows are nailed down except the one in the pantry—the high one. I can get out there if you'll help me."

"T-thet's goo-good!" said Plym, thrusting in another doughnut. "Ye gi-git ter t-ther p-pantry win-winder when ther clock st-strikes one, an' when I-I ra-rap on ther g-glass, open et an' I-I'll b-be ready fer ye! Sho-show me ther win-winder! Wh-whar is et? Qu-ick!"

Hitty showed him the window and he was ready to go. "Take some more doughnuts," urged Hitty, "all you want." "T-thank ye!" and Plym filled a pocket. "Take more if you like them!" "Y-yis'm—T-thank ye ergin!" and he filled another pocket, and was out and in the woods before Aleck appeared. Then he climbed into a tree and surveyed the premises and saw Aleck drive the cows into the barn yard. He waited a while longer, not because he expected to make any discovery, but because the place, or his interest in it, fascinated him. He saw Jack come home with his head hanging on one side and his legs unsteady. Jack gave Aleck orders in a thick voice and Aleck responded by bidding him depart for the lower regions.

Plym now slipped down from his perch and walked rapidly homeward, eating Hitty's good doughnuts as he went and sharing with Stump. He was in high spirits; he had a good report to make to his friend, the peddler. And now, all things ready, for the rescue!

CHAPTER XVI.

PLYM'S MIDNIGHT ADVENTURE.

On the evening of the next day after the adventure at the Carley Farm, Plym with Stump at his side, sat in the kitchen long after his uncle and aunt had gone to bed. The events of the day came in panoramic review before him and brought much satisfaction and contentment with self. But there was one feature that puzzled him—that came up again and again and could not be tucked away into any cosy corner of his mind and be quiet; up it was every minute, almost, daring and menacing him.

The third man, the man who kept guard during the night, was the disturbing feature; how was he to be circumvented? In vain Plym had struggled with this question; there was the man, perhaps armed with a whole collection of implements, and Plym in his thoughts could not make him stir a peg. The fact that there was a night watchman, from the time he learned it from Bruce, had impressed him, almost startled him; indeed, it added interest to every feature of the case, and more, it gave a clue to the importance to someone of what was going on at the Carley Farm. The more he thought of this man, the more restless he became. He paced the kitchen floor in his stocking feet, pausing again and again to look out into the darkness toward Hokopokonoket Swamp and Scar Face Knob beyond. The moon was rising and was near the full and threw its silvery sheen over the landscape.

Plym's mind is made up; he must do it; it is the last chance; he will see with his own eyes, if possible, the man who keeps guard by night around the Carley Castle, and watch his movements; he might discover something that would help the general plan in the final attack. Plym was not a night prowler, much preferring his bed, but he had no more fear in the night than in the broad day. He tiptoed out of the kitchen, for his uncle and aunt slept directly over the kitchen, tied Stump to his kennel, for he could not be trusted to hold his tongue if there were any cause for using it.

He reached Pignut Lane quickly and approached the Carley Mansion noiselessly; the rank grass in the path and the dry leaves wet by recent rain muffled every foot-fall. At last Plym arrived at the end of the lane or where it widened out into the cleared space around the house. At this point was a large oak tree with low branches as large as a man's body. Under this tree Plym could see two sides of the house and the open space in front of it. The place was dark, yet the light of the moon streaming through the tree tops made it possible to see what went on there. But not a sound or movement came to Plym's keen sight or to his pricked ears.

An hour he stood motionless under the tree and watched and listened and then weary and thinking his errand was fruitless, he swung himself into the big oak, where he found a comfortable seat and a better view of the house and the yard. Another hour went by; he heard the clock in Ourtown Center calling the hour of midnight; his eyelids grew heavy and he wished he was in his snug bed.

Sh! The door of the house opened and two dark forms appear, probably Jack and Aleck Carley. They

lean against the pillars of the porch and exchange not a word; they stand motionless and are looking in Plym's direction, evidently, at least their faces are toward him; something else brings them out. Plym is awake now; the weight from his eyelids has dropped, and his blood tingles to his finger tips, for he feels that something is impending; the Carleys are out for some purpose and it will appear soon, doubtless.

Hark! What's that? Back in the woods in Pignut Lane, Plym hears a sound like the rumbling of a wheel over a ledge, and now he knows that a vehicle is moving slowly up the lane. Nearer it comes and he can distinguish the creak and squeak of harness, and the steady tread of a horse, yes, of two horses; and now the labored breathing of the horses, for it is evident that they were driven hard further back in their journey. Lo! a carriage with high seat in front like a hackney coach appears and stops directly beneath the tree; the driver on the box is not more than four feet from Plym. As soon as the team comes up, Jack and Aleck approach it.

"All ready!" said the driver in a low voice. "Bring him out!"

Without a word Jack and Aleck retrace their steps and enter the house. The driver meanwhile turns his team around and the horses are headed in the direction they came; the moon is higher now and there is more light in the yard. Plym is becoming interested, for something is coming home to him with painful suggestiveness. Has he spoiled everything? Jack and Aleck soon come out with a shorter man between them. Plym's hair stands up if hair ever did behave in that way, and his great muscles begin to knot and to twitch; his mind works fast or tries to! Ha, the old man! They mistrust interference and are taking him away; and the

thought like a flash of blinding lightning cleaves through his mind that after all his cunning and his tricks with the cows and Aleck, he has compromised the whole matter and kicked it all over; the thought makes him writhe in spite of himself and the perspiration rolls off in big drops; that third man, that watchman, probably, saw him swing from the tree—something had come between and put up the bars.

But Plym grows cooler; he is surprised that he does not shake or breathe hard as he clings to the tree and waits. The Carleys and their victim approach slowly, for the old man is feeble, evidently; Aleck and Jack curse roundly and bid him help himself. While Plym might use unnecessary by words, yet profanity like this, now in the mouths of the Carleys, especially Jack, stirred his passion always and made him hot. Plym clenched his hands and ground his teeth; he heard the old man ask in a weak, timid voice, "What are you going to do with me?" The Carleys replied with more oaths and bade him hold his tongue. Now they were at the door of the carriage. The old man spoke again, "I want my trunk! That's all I've got!" "Yes, yes," said the driver, who had come down from his seat and was now standing by the door of the carriage, "you'll have your trunk!"

The driver was standing directly under Plym; the old man was in the carriage. When the Carleys, returning to the house for the man's trunk, it is supposed, disappeared in the doorway, Plym dropped. One hundred and ninety-eight pounds of fighting weight flesh fell squarely upon the driver and doubled him up like a jackknife with his face in the long grass. As he went down, Plym's knee struck something hard on the driver's hip; it was a revolver and Plym quickly transferred it to his own pocket, and then fell like hammer and tongs

on the man; catching him around the middle, he hurled him into the brush as though he had been a sheaf of barley, snatched the reins, closed the door of the carriage, whispered to the old man within that he'd save him, sprang on the box and the horses started down the lane on the run. Plym knew every foot of this path; when the wheels touched the ledge, he knew that there was a sharp turn fifty feet ahead by a large hickory, and he knew that the branches of the tree, spreading out, would touch him sitting up so high and warn him. Now they brush his face; he turns at the right moment down a sharp decline and then enters a long stretch of straight path; through it the horses run like greyhounds to the eastern edge of Ragweed Swamp; from this they go into a deep hollow—Blindman's Pocket, it is called—and at last are out on the highway.

During this run, Plym made his plans to abandon the team and conduct the old man to Mottle Farm. When he came out into the highway, he was near the farm, but he must not stop there. Doubtless Jack and Aleck's long legs were already on the jump and not far behind; and, moreover, if he was able to get the old man to the farm before the Carleys came up, he must leave the team there and that would draw suspicion to the Mottle Farm.

Now he came to a place in the road he dreaded—a place where repair and mending of the way was in progress—a place covered several hundred feet with small stones not yet rolled or covered. The night was still—not a breath of air stirred the remnants of the season's foliage; the wheels of the carriage rattling through the stones might be heard a long distance; but there was no help for it now; Plym might have gone the other way to the south around by Butterfly Pond and up to Pikestaff Road; but it could not be mended

now; he forgot all about the mending of the road till he came to the place; if he turned back now, he might run into the arms of the pursuing Carleys.

Plym applied the whip, urged the horses into a run and crossed the long stony stretch as quickly as possible; the sound was loud to Plym's ears and he thought it must be "er dead give 'way;" but he was soon over the place and on to the smooth road; and now a harsh, grating sound that made him shiver, caught his ear; something wrong with the carriage there must be; he jumped down and found the door of the carriage open and grinding against the wheel. Plym whispered to the occupant of the carriage that he would take him to a place of safety, mounted the box again and went on at a brisk pace up Rattlesnake Hill, down like a blast of hurried wind into and through Sheepstail Run, up at a gallop Little Macky Hill, into and out of Pot Luck Valley like a streak, and on toward Bickertown.

In a little gully where the road had been cut down to ease the hill, Plym hitched the horses to a roadside tree and then looked for the horse blankets, for they were warm and short of breath when they started down Pignut Lane in the woods; and now a cloud of steam arose from each horse. On the Mottle Farm no animal received a blow, hardly a cross word, and, hence Plym's first thought was to care for the horses. He sprang to the door of the carriage and began to feel on the seats for the blankets, whispering to the occupant to assist him, and then they would be off. What! He staggered back as though someone had dealt him a blow! The carriage was empty. Plym's breath came short and quick; but there was no time to consider and moan over it; the thought came to Plym like a flash that he had

run away with a coach and pair, and that the best thing for him to do was to get away from it with all speed.

But he could not leave the horses to shiver in the keen midnight air after their hot run; the blankets were drawn out and securely tucked up and buckled under the horses' chins. This done, he vaulted over the fence and paused a moment to think. A few steps beyond was a bank as high as the top of the carriage, covered with trees and a thick growth of underbrush. Plym secreted himself in this retreat, and, lying where he could see the team, waited and listened. Not a sound was heard in any direction.

The Carleys must appear very soon; certainly they would make an effort to trace the team, and trace it they could easily, for they must have heard the wheels rolling over the stony road, and at the next turn, a lighted match would show the way, for the earth was soft from recent rain, and not many two-horse teams passed that way. He must wait to see what happened next. Plym groaned as he thought of the failure of his daring. Ah, if he could have carried his plan through to successful issue—if he could have saved the old man by his efforts alone! His heart beat faster as he thought of the prize—the prize of honor, of personal achievement, aye, and something else, perhaps, so nearly won! The old man must have left the carriage when it was crossing the gravel strip; there he fled, leaving the door of the carriage to grind against the wheel. "But Great Hickory and Everlastin' Hemlock!" groaned Plym, "Wh-what made'm gi-git eout, an' spi-hile ther hull business?"

In a soft bed of dead grass and leaves, Plym laid flat on his stomach and waited; sooner or later, somebody must appear, and he must wait to see the next move and get some clue to his passenger. Now he heard the sound

of wheels up the highway in the direction of Bickertown. It came nearer rapidly and at last a wagon drew up suddenly abreast the carriage.

"Well, I'll be ———. What in the devil does this mean!"

Plym chuckled softly to himself as he recognized the voice. The speaker was no less a personage than Constable Budd. He must be introduced briefly. Constable Budd was the laughing stock of the town—the whole county—anywhere he was known. Big, pompous, arrogant, and not over-stocked under his hat, he was in many respects a Tallyho kind of a man. To the continuous wonder and disgust of the people, Budd was constable year after year. By hook or crook, probably by a "pull" somewhere of a political nature, he climbed into office every year to the great delight, it may be imagined, of the evil-doer who had designs upon any part of the county.

Budd was an arrant coward and humbug, not more fit to be a constable than to command an ocean steamer. If he found a small boy poaching in an orchard, Budd was brave and made a great stir with words and gestures, falling upon the boy with great violence, shaking him and tumbling him about and threatening him with the most dire punishment for the benefit of the people at large; but when larger game confronted him or the doings of real criminals came to his notice, Constable Budd's valor appeared to run to hiding. Always was he on the track of some great criminal, but he was never known to catch anything except the measles, a late acquisition, and the ill will and contempt of the people. The robbery of hen roosts and sheep folds had sent many a farmer into Budd's presence to enter complaint and sue

for protection—the protection that comes from the capture of the thieves and their punishment.

Budd declared that on the night in question, when he ran into the team over near Bickertown, he had been giving sheep thieves a close shave around Bigstump Hill, but it leaked out that he had been chasing small stories and little wit, also bottled cider, at Strikeback Tavern, and had started for home with his topknot awry and all of his large frame in a limbo of great weariness. Budd resembled Tallyho in his bluffing, and his blustering ways and in his general inutility; but in some respects, he was very much unlike the great preacher.

Budd's tongue was an easy roller and never so limber as when forging expletives; he swore by everything by the yard in a profane patois in a way that made small and insignificant swearers subside into respectable speech; and now with the bottled, kicking cider at work, putting in its best strokes, Budd was more profane and voluble than usual. He left the wagon, but caught his foot in the reins and fell headlong. Budd relieved his mind vigorously and then ran against the wheel of the carriage and barked his shin; another volley of oaths followed. Now he procured a lantern from his wagon, and, on his knees on the ground, tried to light it, not easy with hand and eye unsteady.

Certainly, thought Plym, watching Budd with great interest, the Carleys must pursue, and the time is near, probably, when they will appear. Constable Budd was still trying to light the lantern and succeeded in burning his fingers and setting fire to profane wrath. Hist! Plym hears a cautious step behind him and then another at one side. Probably the Carleys have arrived. Doubtless, they heard Budd's strong voice, for he was a Tallyho roarer, and wisely approached under cover. The

Carleys crept up to the fence within a few feet of Plym. Budd had now the light of his lantern to guide him and he began the inspection of the team, examining the inside of the carriage carefully and walking around it several times, muttering, "Well, I'll be ———! What in the devil!" But at last he decided upon action. He untied the horses, took off the blankets and placed them in the carriage; he turned the team around, hitched his own horse behind and mounts the box, but before he can gather up the reins, the two men hiding near Plym, rush down the bank and up to the team; one unties or probably cuts the lead rein of Budd's horse and the other with one bound reaches the box, snatches the reins and tumbles Budd to the ground. The horses start into a run down the slope and Budd's horse, although free, follows. Budd was on the ground motionless, but he is playing possum, probably.

As soon as the sound of wheels dies away, Budd raises his head and looks around, and at last, sure that no others are near to fall upon him, rises quickly and limps away without a word—so scared that he dare not open his lips. Plym now ran home across the fields and liberated Stump, for midnight speculators were abroad—speculators in anything not tied down or guarded by a good dog like Stump. Plym observed that as he untied Stump, he went around the corner of the barn like a whisk broom after a purloining cat.

As Plym slipped into his bed and fitted himself into his mattress mould, he sighed, "M-my, this is goo-good! I-I'm er je-jest er ready t-er d-dew er nice b-bit o' s-sleepin'! I-I hed 'nough fer one n-night!" But his time to cuddle up to and to coodle sleep had not come. When Stump bayed at the moon or answered the impudent dog over in Whackbesom Field and never dared

to come nearer, there was a lazy drawl in his voice—a lingering, diminuendo intonation whittled down to a fine point—merely exercise to keep his voice chords in tune and to strengthen his lungs; but when Stump had treed a coon or cornered a woodchuck in the stone fence, his bark was short and decisive—chopped off even into solid volumes or chunks of explosive melody—and he "meant business." Stump was now having a little "business" talk with somebody or something in the orchard below the barn, and making the still night air ring with his protestations indicative of a difference of opinion on the part of Stump and whatever had been presented to him.

"Cracky!" exclaimed Plym, "ain't I-I ever g-goin' ter gi-git no s-sleep er gin? Wh-what's u-pup neow? Hum! P-per'aps I-I'll gi-git ther ol man yit!" Animated with this thought, he hastened out with all speed, for the Carleys, having their carriage and horses again, would look for their prisoner, and Stump's barking would show to anyone within hearing that something was stirring on the Mottle Farm; that must be stopped immediately. Plym ran to the rear of the barn, and Stump, growling, full of wrath and bristling, came to him. Plym muzzled him by a cord around his jaws, and then followed him cautiously.

Stump went straight to a low apple tree, and, lo! there was a man in the branches—at least a human form in man's dress. "Wh-what b-be ye er d-dewin' here?" asked Plym in a whisper, for he did not know who might be within hearing in the dark tree clumps all around. The man replied by a volley of oaths. This first shot from the tree staggered Plym. He had thought of the Carley prisoner as a pious man, for Bruce had told him that he saw him through the crack in the

closet door reading his Bible. But perhaps it was not the Bible that the old man was reading, or perhaps this was not the man who had been in the carriage.

"Wh-what be ye er d-dewin' here, an' wh-what d-d'ye wa-want?" asked Plym.

"I want some place to stay in till morning—till I get my bearings. Find me a place, can't you? That d——d dog has got a piece of my pantaloons now!" The man spoke and swore in a whisper, a fact that was suggestive to Plym.

"Wh-whar'd ye c-come from."

"Find me a place to crawl into till morning, won't you, quick! I'll tell you all about it! I won't touch a thing or hurt anybody! Take pity on a fellow, can't you, and be quick about it!"

Thus appealed to, Plym ordered the man down and bade him follow. He led the way to the cook room, the place where his uncle prepared food for the hogs. The room was warm, for the big kettle had been boiling during the day before and was now full of good pig soup made of yellow pumpkins, potato pickings, turnips and rich corn meal. Plym lighted a lantern that was hanging in the room and examined his visitor. He was not an old man at all, not more than thirty-five or forty and his hair and short whiskers were jet black; he was a sinister, evil looking man; a great scar on one cheek and another across his nose made him almost hideous; he had seen service of some kind that had left its mark upon him. Plym recoiled a little when he had a good view of the man, and thought of the two revolvers he had in his pockets—his own and the one he took from the pocket of the driver of the carriage.

"N-neow, t-tell me," said Plym, taking a seat on a nail

keg as far from the man as he could, "wh-what ye're er d-dewin' rou-roun' here t-this time o' night!"

"Stutter some, eh?" queried the man, laughing.

"N-never ye m-mind erbeout m-my stut-stut-her! I-I wanter know wh-what ye go-got t-ter s-say fer yerself, an' pur-purty qu-ick, t-tew!" The reference to his stutter, which always "riled" him, with a sneering laugh, caused Plym to straighten up, and perhaps, unconsciously, his hand went back to his hip pocket. The stranger observed this and looked at Plym with his shifting black eyes and appeared to be studying him. Evidently he was a cool, calculating man, and now was in doubt as to what to say or do.

"Well," said the man, finding his tongue at last, "being out of money, I was walking to the city where my friends are, and, thinking I could shorten the way, took to the fields and tried to go 'cross lots, but I lost the way and your d——d dog drove me into a tree after taking a piece out of me—out of my clothing, anyway."

"Wh-whar'd ye c-come from?"

"Down Porgy Ridge way."

"Porgy Ridge!" blurted Plym. "Lo-lots ye did! P-Porgy Ridge's n-nearer t-ther c-city'n t-this! P-Porgy Ri-Ridge's on t-tother side o' But-Buttermilk Creek!"

The stranger winced and appeared to be taken back. "Well," he said, "I'm all turned 'round! Don't know where I am! I told you I lost my way!"

"Wh-what t-time'd ye l-leave P-Porgy Ri-Ridge?"

"Yesterday afternoon."

"Lo-lots ye did! An'-an' ye've b-ben er t-travelin' ever s-sence ri-right in t-ther wr-wrong d-d'rection? P-p'aps ye'll make me b-b'lieve all thet!"

In the meantime, Plym had made a discovery. When

Sheriff Budd lighted his lantern, he saw that the horse blankets were red or had more red in them than any other color, and now on the dingy suit of the stranger was here and there a piece of red lint. Without doubt this was the man who had been in the carriage. If it was the man, and if this was the man he had swung down from trees for—if he was the man for whom Bruce was to do so much, he, Plym, had seen enough; this man was not worth so much attention; but perhaps this was not the prisoner, and for the sake of all, Plym determined to find out who he was.

Plym's wrath was waking up. This man was playing with him. His stealthy look, the sneering expression of his face, although the broad scar might be responsible in part, and the twitching of the corners of his mouth when Plym stuttered as though he could hardly suppress his laughter, had its immediate effect upon Plym.

"I-I've asked ye t-two er t-three times wh-what ye're here fer, an' ye d-don't 'pear t-ter hev er n'answer reready! I-I don't s-see no goo-goo-good reason fer yer po-pokin' rou-roun' this 'ere b-barn t'this t-time o' night! 'Le-'less ye k-kin gi-give er b-better 'count o' yer self an' t-tell er leetle stra-straighter st-story, ye k-kin travel!"

"Let me stay till daylight! Must be most morning now. I won't touch a thing or trouble you! Give me a place somewhere that d——d dog—"

"Le-let ther d-dog er lone! We-we're b-boardin' him je-jest ter look arter sech crit-critters's ye 'pear t-ter be! Ye or-orter be mi-mi-highty thankful thet St-Stump d-didn't chaw yer leg off! Mo-most likely he wa-was er goin' t-ter d-dew et, b-but er git-gittin' er ta-taste o' ye an' n-not er likin' t-ther fla-flavor, wa-was glad t-ter gi-git erway with only er p-piece o' yer b-breeches! As

fer yer st-stayin', ye can't! We d-don't wa-want n-no sech queer chicks's ye er roo-roostin' rou-roun' here! An' gi-git st-started, t-tew! I-I've s-seen 'nough o' ye!"

Plym moved a step nearer, and the man sprang up and fixed his glittering black eyes on Plym. The corners of his mouth did not twitch now; a serious expression came into his face. Evidently he regarded Plym at first as a country bumpkin and yokel who would accept any explanation or be content with none; he saw his mistake; he realized now, perhaps, that he had a fearless, determined man to deal with. Their eyes met and they measured each other. Stump now disturbed the midnight quiet again.

"Wh-what's c-come neow?" muttered Plym. S-some m-more like ye er p-prowlin' roun'?" At Stump's first bark, the man jumped and looked toward the door. "Lock the door!" he exclaimed in a whisper, excitedly. "Don't let 'em find me!"

"D-don't le-let who find ye?"

"Let me get out of sight somewhere! I'll tell ye all about it!"

"Ye've li-lied t-ter me once, an' wi-will ergin, an' I-I c-can't trest ye; bu-but gi-git in here! I-I'll hev ye safe, anyway!" and Plym opened a large grain bin, nearly empty, and into it the man jumped eagerly. Plym let down the cover, drew the hasp over the staple and thrust a cob through it. Then he extinguished the lantern and went out. Stump came to him and was muzzled as before. Remaining by the cook room in its deepest shadow, Plym made out the form of a man moving slowly in the orchard, and as his eyes became more accustomed to the darkness, he discerned another form standing by a tree—probably Jack and Aleck Carley. If the man in the bin is the one who was in the carriage,

and there could be little doubt of it, the Carleys were looking for him.

An idea thrusts itself into Plym's brain, already befogged by too many complications. He returns to the cook room, taking Stump with him, still muzzled, and locks the door; running through the adjoining shed, he locks the door leading to the barn, and returns to the man in the meal chest.

"T-thar's t-tew chaps er pro-prowlin' rou-roun' loo-lookin' fer ye er s-somebody! Wh-who be t-they?"

"How do I know?"

"Loo-look here, ye b-black fa-faced lo-loafer, I-I've foo-fooled with ye long 'nough! Ye k-know wh-who's loo-lookin' fer ye! N-neow, ye'll t-tell m-me quicker'n ch-chain li-lightnin' wh-who they b-be, er I-I'll ca-call'm right in here! C-come, qu-ick, n-neow!"

"I'll tell you! The Carley boys are after me!"

"Hum! Wh-what they wa-want o' ye?"

The man hesitated and writhed in his nest of good meal. The cover was raised only an inch or two, for Plym did not like to trust himself in the dark with the man without something between, although if this was the man who had been in the carriage, he was not armed, probably, for he had seen him led out between the two Carleys, and as they appeared to have him under subjection, they would see, doubtless, that he carried no weapons. Plym felt the cover rising from some force under it, and he dashed it down and sprang onto it. The movement might have had no significance, but caution cost nothing, and might as well be used. The cover did not fit closely, and the man's voice sounded plain enough with the cover down.

"Hold on!" he cried. "I'll tell you all about it!"

"An-answer m-me qu-ick, t-then! N-no more mon-monkey wo-work! Speak qu-ick er y're er g-goner!"

"Well, I've been working for the Carley boys."

"Wo-workin'!" snarled Plym. "Lo-lots ye hev! Wh-what er d-dewin'?"

"Just helping around the farm."

"Y-ye're er liar! Wh-when'd ye c-come 'way f-from t-ther Car-Carley f-f-farm? I-I'll break ev'ry bone in y'yer wuth-wuthless car-carkiss ef ye d-don't c-come ter t-time qu-ick!"

"Come 'way this morning."

"Wh-what t-time?"

" 'Bout midnight."

"D-did ye ri-ride er wa-walk?"

"Rode."

"Wh-what in?"

"Some kind of a carriage."

"He-heow f-fur'd ye ri-ride?"

"Not far! I had a chance to slip out—'"

"N-neow one ques-question more, an' ef ye d-don't an-answer qu-ick, I-I'll twist yer neck f-fer ye! Wh-what ther Car-Carleys wa-want o' ye? Wh-why be they so k-keerful o' ye, an' d-don't wa-want ye ter s-slip er-erway? Wh-what t-they wa-want o' ye so per-per-tic'lar?"

"That's a private matter."

Plym threw back the cover of the meal chest and went head first into it, turned the man on his face, brought his arms behind him and held them there and then took a seat on the man's back.

"T-thar's pi-pizen in yer loo-looks an' in t-ther t-touch o' ye may be, b-but I-I've foo-fooled with ye j-jest's long's I-I k-kin st-stan' et! T-this's er goo-good easy se-seat, an' ye've go-got er nice so-soft cu-cushion o'

co-cob me-meal ter rest yer n-nose in! N-neow le-let's hear wh-what ye've go-got t-ter s-say! Wh-what t-ther Car-Carleys wa-want ye f-fer?"

"Because they're 'fraid I'll tell something."

"Wh-what's is et?"

The man tried to turn, but Plym, holding both the man's hands in one grip, seized him by the throat. "Wh-what they 'fraid ye'll t-tell? E-ef I-I t-take er nother hi-hitch, ye'll wisht ye ha-hadn't growed u-pup!"

"The Carley boys are keeping an old man there!"

"Wh-what f-fer?"

"I don't know!"

"Ho-honest I-Injun?"

"Yes."

"Ho-hope t-ter d-die?"

"Yes, and I will soon if you don't let me up! I'm nearly smothered in this meal!"

But before releasing the man, Plym thought it wise to examine his person to see if he carried any concealed weapons, although he had decided already that under the circumstances, he would not be likely to be thus provided. Ha! Under the left arm was something about a foot long. Despite the man's profane and violent protest, Plym drew it out, sprang out of the bin, and closed the cover and locked it with the cob. Stump had been muzzled during this melee in the meal bin, and now he growled, sniffed and scratched at the door. Evidently the Carleys were nearer.

But Plym had no desire to meet the Carleys; the fact that he was up at this time of the night might cause the rise of suspicion; he had identified the man who was in the carriage, and that was enough; he would like to know more of this man and the object of the midnight ride, but the time of the final attack was near, and in the

end, light would be thrown, doubtless, on this dark transaction; enough for Plym that this black ruffian was not the man about whom Plym had woven in his imagination such a web of interest. Probably Stump's bark had attracted the Carleys, but they could not rely on that as a sure sign of anything, for Stump barked every night.

Hark! There's a step at the door, and, cautiously, the latch is lifted; but the door is locked and no man can enter unless he forces the door. The cook room was a part of a long row of low buildings connecting the barn and the house; there was no window in it, all the light coming through the door, and, hence, if the Carleys had been skulking while the lantern burned, they could not see it; it was not lighted now and no tell tale light showed under the door. The latch was lifted again, but no attempt was made to force the door.

Another sound now caught Plym's ear—the closing of a door at the house end of the long row of buildings. Archelaus was up usually by four o'clock, sometimes earlier. One might go from the house to the barn under cover, but the covered passage was not used in summer—not till hard winter set in. If Archelaus came through the buildings and found the door of the cook room locked, his curiosity would be excited, and he would go to the barn and find the door locked, too; and then would begin in earnest an investigation to know the cause of all this locking up. But anything to beat the Carleys at their game whatever it might be. His uncle is up and building the kitchen fire, probably, and will appear soon. Plym opened the bin and ordered his guest to come out; he led him into the next room and pointed out a hiding place.

"N-neow qu-ick f-fer yer p-precious life! T-they're

arter ye, an' I-I d-don't k-keer heow s-soon they gi-git ye! C-climb u-pup t-thar! Ye'll f-find er lo-lot o' s-soft lum-lumber u-pup t-thar, an' k-kin make er nice easy p-place t-ter rest yer we-weary f-frame in! K-keep d-dark till I-I ca-call ye! I-I d-don't b-b'lieve ye're wuth sa-savin', b-but gi-git u-pup t-thar! An' st-stay pu-put!"

Plym unmuzzled Stump and let him go, unlocked all the doors and the coast was clear for Uncle Archelaus. Plym, however, did not wish to meet his uncle at this moment, for explanation must be given so unusual was it for him to rise in advance of his uncle; he waited till he heard the milk pails rattle in the stable, and then crept to his bed. He heard Stump's bark in the lower orchard; the Carleys were retreating. Let him bark!

CHAPTER XVII.

SIS' ANN AND THE PEDDLER.

The old (on duty since the marriage day of Archelaus and Aseneth) Thomas (not the man of almanac fame, although clocks and almanacs have the same stock in trade-time) clock (surmounted by a cathedral roof and four pinacles, and embellished by a green horse and a blue rider on the pendulum door) tolled off the hour of ten (without hitch or miss) with only a slight quavering in its voice (indicative of the approach and grip of old age), for it began to mark time and to direct the affairs of the Mottle Farm when clockmakers were neither fast nor slow—when their mental and moral pendulums swung steadily, and, like a reversing stencil, rubbed up hard against the pad, well inked with honesty, at every vibration—when clocks were brought into the world and educated for long lives of usefulness, to run the race set before them without the help of the tinker doctor (with no help at all except a little butternut oil let into joints with a pin feather) having good legs and thorough command of them and a strong constitution generally.

This old clock, I say, with the green horse prancing and the blue rider keeping his seat firmly, was making announcement by ten good strokes on the bell, when Plym entered the kitchen (the morning after his midnight adventure) like a man who had committed some grievous offence and had come to receive paying punishment for it. The clock evidently was acquainted with all the facts, and spoke the hour a little louder (accord-

ing to Plym's self-accused mind) than usual and ticked emphatically if not spitefully.

Aunt Aseneth, bustling around the kitchen, elbow deep in preserve making, looked at Plym sharply, and took up the scolding tone of the clock and spoke with great freedom and emphasis of the value of time and the need of saving every chip of it, and the clock ticked out a loud tattoo to send the words home to the sleeper who had encroached upon bright morning hours.

"Ye dew look kinder 'shamed er comin' deown ter breakfast ten 'clock, leavin' yer uncle ter dew all ther chores an' ther milkin' an' he ain't feelin' over peart, nuther—got er crick in his back an' ther rheum'tis' botherin'm terruble! I dew think ye mought be er leetle more considerin'—"

"A-aunty, I-I je-jest d-didn't mean ter! O-oversiept, an' c-couldn't he-help myself! Wh-why d-didn't ye c-call m-me?"

"Call ye! Did call ye helf er dozen times, but Lor'! heow ye slept! They must ha' heered ye snore over ter Split Hoof Hill! What be ye er dewin' o' nights ter git so wearied eout? I don't like ther looks on't!"

"E-et's' mi-highty hard wo-work hun-huntin' rou-roun' an' er tramp-trampin' t-through ther woo-woods—"

"Huntin'! I kinder wisht Mr. Sizer (the name of the consumptive boarder) hadn't give ye all his traps an' things! Seems so et turned yer head! I want ye ter be suthin' more'n er trampin' hunter er killin' ev'rythin'! Ther birds an' squirrels an' the rabbits hev jest's much right ter live's ye—"

"N-not when t-they're e-eatin' u-pup eour clo-clover, an' er car-carryin' off c-corn an' wheat an' bar-barley! Wh-why u-pup in t-ther Benttree Lot, t-thar's er chuck

an' er b-big fam'ly, f-fat's' pigs, er d-dewin' more dam-damage'n' ye k-kin shake er st-stick at! B-but me'n Stump b-be er layin' low f-fer'm! B-but ye k-know, A-Aunty, I-I never k-kill er b-bird yit 'cept er ga-game b-bird ter eat er t-ter se-sell! A-as fer b-bein' s-suthin' an' s-somebody, I-I be je-jest er t-tryin' ter b-be like ye an' Un-Uncle Ark-Ark'lus, near's I-I k-kin be!" Plym knew that the use of the endearing term "Aunty," not always brought into his conversation, would go to the mark which was his breakfast, of which he saw nothing yet.

"Lor'!" said his aunt, smiling against her will, "what er talker ye're gittin' ter be! 'Spose ye want suthin' ter eat fer breakfast! What ye er goin' ter hev? Ark'lus eat up ev'rythin'!"

"Je-jest er s-slice o' thet ha-ham—er-er s-slice clear ercrost, cu-cut th-thick an' t-tew t-thumpin' b-big eggs, an' f-fried per-pertaters an' coffee!"

"Yer appetite's powerful good yit! But ye'll hev ter wait, an' while ye're er waitin', ye mought's well be er dewin' suthin'! Ye kin cut this paper inter roun' pieces like this one!"

"Yi-yis, I-I will, A-Aunty! I-I'll d-dew all ther cu-cuttin' ye wa-want! A-Aunty, co-couldn't ye give m-me er rou-rousin' b-big p-piece o' thet pou-poun' ca-cake we hed S-Sunday? T-Thar ain't n-no ca-cake in this t-teown ter co-come ni-nigher'n mile to't! T-thet wo-woman o-over ter Haw-Hawkseye B-Bar, ther wh-which tol' ye at t-ther Dor-Dorcas t-thet s-she knowed heow ter m-make pou-poun' ca-cake'd e-eat her eyes, ef s-she co-could m-make ca-cake like thet!"

"Ye're er dreffle easy talker, spite o' yer stutter, when ye want suthin'," responded Aseneth, who knew "soft

solder" when she saw it, but could never resist its influence when Plym laid hold of it.

The kitchen table was covered with jellies in glass jars and tumblers brought out to be capped with white paper tied over the top of each jar. Plym worked industriously, for the odor of the ham and the coffee filled the room, and a big wedge of the pound cake was already on the table in a little cleared place where he was to have his breakfast.

At this juncture, Archelaus appeared; he was in a state of perturbation, apparently, of both mind and body; his jaw hung down at a distended angle, his eyes opened and shut again, as they did always when a startling discovery was made. When Plym saw what he had in his hand he knew what was coming.

"Jest see, will ye, what I foun' in ther cook room!" and he held up the long dagger Plym had taken from the man and had forgotten to put out of sight. It was a queer weapon—a tapering, two-edged blade a foot long with a sword handle and in a worn leather case. Plym might say that he never saw it before, as, indeed, he had not, but he said nothing. Aseneth sat down and threw up her hands, unable to find words or expression to meet the emergency.

"An' I tell ye," continued Archelaus, placing the dagger on the mantle as though it was a loaded gun and might go off, "somebody's er ben in ther meal chist er tumblin' roun', an' er trackin' ther meal inter ther lumber room! What be we er comin' tew?"

"I'm er goin' right deown ter see Constable Budd!" said Aseneth. "Yis, I be! Ef people with sech things's thet be er prowlin' roun' nights—"

"D-don't ye g-go near B-Budd," put in Plym. "He-he'll je-jest m-make er gret rum-rumpus 'beout et, an'

thet's all 't c-come ter! He-he's er m-makin' er col-collection o' guns an' p-pistils, an' he'd like mi-highty well ter gi-git thet th-thing! D-don't ye gi-give et'm! Ye-ye n-needn't b-be so s-scared! 'T-'tain't n-nothin'. S-some tr-tramp je-jest er st-staid t-thar! T-thet's all t-ther is erbeout et!"

"But what's er tramp er dewin' with sech er thing's thet!" demanded Archelaus, pointing carefully to the weapon.

"L-lor'!" replied Plym, "t-thet ain't noth-nothin'! T-they car-carry anything t-they k-kin gi-git! S-somebody je-jest laid e-et d-deown an' f-fergot et! S-some on'm hev s-scythes u-pup their b-backs, an' I-I heered o' one f-feller t-thet hed er t-three ti-tined p-pitch fork st-strapped under his v-vest. B-but, I-I tell ye, Un-Uncle Ark-Ark'lus, what we got t-ter d-dew! We g-got ter lo-lock u-pup er leetle cl-closter, an' kee-keep sech chaps e-eout!"

"Ye're purty late ter breakfast!" observed Archelaus, evidently relieved by Plym's assurances in relation to the dagger.

"Yi-yis I-I be, Un-Uncle Ark-Ark'lus! I-I je-jest o-overslept! Ye-ye k-kin st-stay in b-bed t-tomorrer m-mornin', er any t-time, long's ye wanter, an' I-I'll d-dew ther m-milkin' an' all t-ther chores!"

"Wanter know! Wal, I'll see erbeout et!" and he went to the barn to hammer on his new hog pen. The flurry in regard to the discovery in the cook room over, Aseneth resumed her cheerfulness and her work, assured again and again by Plym that ther was no cause for alarm.

"Mebby ye're right, but I feel sorter skeery when sech folks be er roamin' roun'! I dew think ther con-

stable orter know 'beout et! He'd ketch sech chaps quick!"

"Lo-lots he wo-would! He-he wo-wouldn't k-ketch er lame k-keow!"

"When ye git yer breakfast—Lor', heow ye do eat!—I want ye ter take some presarves deown ter Mis' Tally-ho. I'm ergoin' ter give her er dozen jars!"

"Wh-what m-makes ye d-dew et!" exclaimed Plym in disgust. "T-thet T-Tallyho sh-shaver'll gi-git ev'ry m-mite o't; he'll je-jest wa-waller in et an' choke hi-himself! E-ef ye wanter k-keep thet in-interestin' b-boy er wh-while lo-longer, ye'd bet-better k-keep jam 'way f-from'm. I-I s-see yo-young Tal-Tallyjackanapes t-tother d-day er tag-taggin' 'long erhind his paw ter t-ther p-post of-office, an' he p-put u-pup his f-fingers ter his n-nose an' d-did so t-ter me. Jim-jiminy, ef I-I co-could ha' g-got m-my han's on'm, I-I'd er mixed'm some! B-but I-I'm er la-layin' low f-fer'm, an' wh-when I-I gi-git'm—"

"Neow, Plym, ye stop! Ye mustn't hev sech feelin's! Ye're older'n Harold, an' orter set er good 'xample!"

"D-don't k-keer ef I-I b-be's ol's Merthuserlum, t-thet buf-buffer chap ca-can't f-finger his n-nose ter m-me 'thout gi-gittin' wal-wallopped! I-I tell ye, A-Aunty, wh-what I-I b-be ergoin' t-ter d-dew! I-I'm ergoin' ter gi-git one o' t-thet Tal-Tallyho's e-ears ter men' t-ther ho-hole in t-ther h-hen house with! E-et's je-jest b-big 'nough—"

"Thet'll dew, Plym! I can't git time ter listun ter sech talk! I know ye don't mean nothin' by et, but et don't soun' well, an' I dew hope ye don't talk thet way 'way from home! Neow ye git thet covered baxit an' take these 'ere jars deown ter Mis' Tallyho, an' I 'spect ye'll dew et nice an' perlite! I guess ye kin dew's much's

thet fer me arter I've giv ye sech er nice breakfast right in ther middle o' the forenoon—"

"A-Aunty, ye know I-I'll d-dew anythin' f-fer ye, b-but et d-doos go ergin t-ther gr-grain ter b-be er car-carryin' d-deown stu-stuffin' fer thet gr-greedy gut!"

"An' then I want ye ter take some jars over ter Hitty Carley. She seemed kinder deown in her sperits when I was thar—"

"Yi-yis, A-Aunty, I-I will!" responded Plym with great animation. "An' 'sp-'sposin' I-I g-go ter ther Car-Carley Farm f-fust, ri-right erway, an' t-take yo-young Tal-Tallyho's fod-fodder arter din-dinner! Gi-give ther p-poor hu-hungry b-boy er chance t-ter live er leetle lo-longer!"

While his aunt was in the pantry, Plym secreted in his pocket a piece of ham between two thick slices of bread, for continually before him was the man in the lumber loft. How was he to be got rid of? Going to the barn, Plym found his uncle busy at the new hog pen and out of hearing if anything transpired in the lumber room. But, to Plym's great relief, no man could be found. How he made his escape, if he did, without leaving more of his clothing in care of Stump, was a mystery, unless he went immediately when he heard Stump's bark in the lower orchard and was thus led to believe that the Carleys had retired. At all events he was gone and Plym breathed easier. Now he could turn his attention to events impending and give them all the mind he could muster.

The visit to Hitty Carley would be in the nick and niche of time, if Plym could manage to see her alone, for he would like to know if, in consequence of what happened the night before, any change was to be made in the routine at the Carley Farm. The Carleys, it must

be admitted, were sly and sharp; the events of the previous night must reveal to them the fact that they were under other eyes, that somebody had suspicion of something and was watching.

With the basket of preserves and Stump running before, Plym set out for the Carley Farm. When he reached the great ant heap, he sat down to rest a moment, to watch the ants, to review the rescue of the great preacher and to share with Stump the slice of ham and bread he had reserved for the man supposed to be in the lumber loft. If Plym thought it was early to dine again, Stump did not, and devoured eagerly the most of the luncheon. When Plym reached the end of Pignut Lane, he approached the house cautiously, not because he had any fear of anything, but that he might rush into the kitchen and have a word with Hitty, if he found her alone, before the boys appeared; if he saw either Jack or Aleck loafing about, he could wait a while for the scene to shift.

He saw no one and no movement around the house, and, emerging from the thicket nearest the kitchen, ran into Hitty's presence. She met him with a startled, anxious look and placed her finger to her lips. Plym made known his errand in a few words and whispered, "Whar-whar's t-ther b-boys?"

"Round here, somewhere."

"I-is e-ev'rythin' all ri-right? B-be ye ready?"

"Yes!"

"Ye-ye'll b-be ter ther win-winder?"

"Yes!"

"Wh-what hap-happened here las' ni-night?"

"O, I don't know—I don't know! Something awful, I'm afraid! What do you know about it?"

"I-I'll tell ye some-sometime! I-is t-thar er m-man wa-watchin' e-ev'ry ni-night?"

"Yes! They've got a new one!"

"Hokypoky! Wh-whar's t-tother one?"

"Went away last night! Sh! There's Jack coming!"

"A-Aunt 'Se-'Seneth thought mebby ye mi-might like ter s-see wh-what lu-luck she'd b-ben er hev-hevin' with her per-perservin', an' sent o-ver er f-few jar-jars je-jest ter t-try," announced Plym in a loud voice as Jack entered.

"What's that?" demanded Jack, regarding Plym suspiciously. "What do you want?"

"Wa-wal, I-I hed er lee-leetle bi-business wi-with M-Miss Hit-Hitty an' I-I c-come ter d-dew et! T-thet's wh-what I-I wa-want! An-any ob-objecshin? An'," continued Plym, turning to Hitty and ignoring Jack, "A-Aunt 'Se-'Seneth says e-es heow s-she ho-hopes ye'll gi-git rou-roun' ter re-retarn her ca-call soo-soon's ye k-kin d-dew et. Goo-good morn-mornin', ma'am!" and Plym took his basket and departed, for he knew that Jack would remain in the room while he staid. Plym returned home by way of the postoffice. In front of the office, Constable Budd was talking to a knot of idlers, puffing and blowing and lifting up his voice with a roar; he was recounting his adventures near Bickertown the night before, where he met, like Falstaff, a great host, thirty or forty rascals thirsting for his blood, and was about to bag the whole covey alone and unaided when his foot slipped and he went down with a dozen of them lying around him who had fallen by his mighty arm. One of the auditors remarked, "An' ye didn't git holt nary one?"

"No," admitted Budd, "they were too many for me!

But I'm on their track! I'll have every d——d one of them before night!"

After dinner, Plym went to the village street again to deliver the preserves to the parsonage. Mr. Tallyho and his boy were absent. Plym was glad; he had too much respect for his aunt to attempt "to square the account" with young Tallyho while in her service and on a "polite errand," therefore, he was glad that the temptation was removed. As he turned homeward, he saw the old peddler toiling up Rattlesnake Hill slowly and apparently painfully. Here was an opportunity to see him alone and make his report, but his aunt had said with vehemence and emphasis that that "lyin' peddler" should not come into the house again, and, therefore, Plym must hasten home by another route and use his influence to have the aged and decrepit peddler treated as became his years and wisdom. Plym laughed softly to himself as he vaulted the roadside fence and struck out into Bramble Patch Meadow and ran home across lots.

"A-Aunty!" said Plym, out of breath except in short gasps, as he bolted into the kitchen, "t-thet ol' ped-peddler's er-er com-comin' u-pup ther rud, er p-pintin', mebby, f-fer here—"

"I sha'n't hev'm! Folks as tells sech stories ain't ter be 'pended on! I can't go ter ther trouble o' lockin' up ev'rythin', my spoons an' things, an' I don't wanter lay er wake all night er thinkin' I'll be robbed! 'Sides, I can't git in no word nowhars! I don't want all ther breath took outer my body er tryin' ter make er deaf man hear! Et's terruble wearin'!"

"He-he won't t-tech yer si-silver sp-spoons! He-he's har-harmless es p-pie! An' he t-tells mi-highty slick stories e-ef they b-be all li-lies. Le-let's let'm st-stay,

wo-won't ye, A-Aunty? I-I'll b-be 'spon-'sponsible fer'm, an' k-keep my e-hies on'm!"

"Will ye take 'm in yer bed an' see he don't go er roamin' roun' arter we're all ersleep?"

"Yi-yis, I-I will, A-Aunty! I-I'll st-strap 'm ter ther b-bed so's he ca-can't move er har t-till morn-mornin'!"

A wagon rolled into the yard and a well known figure began to descend. One look was enough for Plym; he fled with his jaw hanging and flapping like an unhinged door, to the wood house and kicked the saw-buck. Stump, with his tail between his legs, ran under the barn and howled as though the mad dog officer from Plumbilly Hill was looking for him; Rebecca went to the barn like a streak greased, her tail as large as a lamp chimney brush, and some clucking hens and a portly rooster of the Tallyho breed, pillaging in Aseneth's flower patch in the angle of the house, came out with a chorus of cackles and took to heels and wings as though their necks were in danger, and the frying pan was in pursuit.

Archelaus was still at work on his new hog pen, and when he saw the arrival, pounded his thumb three times, held it in his mouth to ease the pain, and then, unable to find sufficient relief, crept into the barn and onto the scaffold, where he had a tussle with his enemy, the bale of hay.

Sis' Ann had arrived. She announced that she might stay a week if she was wanted, and, Plym, hearing this, groaned and attacked the saw-buck again. Sis' Ann was a harmless fellow creature despite the uproar occasioned by her appearance; but in this life are many harmless things that may be given wide range—the other side of the street—all the street—with profit and Sis' Ann was one of them. She was a "woman's righter,"

accepting her word and phraseology. Her chief source of delight appeared to be to stick pins into people, and anomalous as it may appear, she drove them deeper if they were not present, and to inveigh against the "lordly" domination of that "abject critter" known as man.

Sis' Ann had an extraordinary faculty and experience of great length, of saying and doing the wrong thing when it would rankle the most. If she met a man having a pimple on his nose, she began immediately to make minute inquiries ostensibly to suggest a remedy, as she did on one occasion, and advised the immediate application of a poultice composed of one part elderberry bark, one part boneset, one part fat taken from a blacksnake's back, seven inches and three-quarters from his head, killed in the last quarter of the harvest moon. Within half an hour Sis' Ann had a brush with Plym.

"Wal, I dew declare, Plym, ye hev growed sence I saw ye las'! But ye're gittin' ter be dreffle coarse an' scrawney, an' I suspect ye don't more'n helf arn yer salt! I see ye're stutterin' yit! Seems ter me ye're gittin' ol' 'nough ter git shet o' thet! Lor'! hain't ye no spunk! Why don't ye stop?"

"He-heow b-be I-I er-ergoin' t-ter st-stop et?"

"Why, jest stop! Think erfore ye speak! Makes ye 'pear dreffle silly an' foolish!"

"Wa-wal, ye n-needn't both-bother yerself 'b-'beout m-me! Gu-guess I-I k-kin stut-stut-stut—Gret Hemlock an' Hickory!—stut-stut-her ef I-I wanter! 'T-'tain't no-none o' yer con-consarns as I-I s-see!"

"Ye're gittin' ter swearin' awful, tew! 'Seneth, I allus knowed ye'd spile thet boy! Ye ain't bringin' 'm up jest right!"

"Wi-wish ye wo-wouldn't t-trouble yer self 'b-'beout

m-me! Wh-why ca-can't ye 'tend ter yer own con-con-sarns!"

"Thar, Plym; thet'll dew!" said his Aunt Aseneth.

"Wa-wal, she need-needn't sass m-my stut-stut-stut—" but his speech was still more clogged when attention was drawn to it, and of all words the word "stutter" was the hardest, and he fled in silent wrath. He found his uncle at work on the hog pen. Plym chuckled when he saw the layer of dust that overspread his uncle's physiognomy and clothing; he knew where he had been and was glad if he could derive comfort from something in this time of disturbance by Sis' Ann.

"Si-Sis' Ann's c-come!" volunteered Plym.

"I see she hev!"

"An'-an' she s-says s-she be ergoin' t-ter st-stay er we-week, like 'nough t-tew we-weeks! Her-heard her s-say et!"

Archelaus brought his hammer down a little harder, but he could not be trapped into an expression of opinion unless it was complimentary. In the present crisis, as he was most of the time, he was neutral. Sis' Ann had such respect for Archelaus that she let him alone, and he was thankful, and as long as she kept her distance, the world with Archelaus was unturned and jogged along as usual. But now the old peddler appeared and limped up to the porch as though he had walked a hundred miles that day. Plym ran to the house to be present at the reception.

"Hu-hum!" soliloquized Plym, "we're je-jest in f-fer er pic-picnic! Si-Sis' Ann'll gi-give ther ped-peddler er sh-shakin' u-pup, an' don't ye for-forgit et, nu-nuther, Mi-sis-ter P-lympton Han-Hanker! An' ef he gi-gits erway an' n-no p-pieces lost, he-he'll b-be je-jest lucky!

Bu-but by Jim-jiminy, et's mi-mighty han-handy fer'm thet he's dee-deef," and Plym laughed at his own wit.

The old peddler was received in the sitting room, and began to show his wares. Sis' Ann, also, took the peddler in hand and had him all to herself, for Aseneth, when her sister was present and in ordinary wordy trim, retired into comparative silence. While Aseneth, as recorded in this true story, now working into the pith of things, was in possession of a quick and eager tongue—a sling for verbal missiles pared, and sometimes cored, that is to say, hyphenated, according to the rules of dialectic syncope and elision, yet in the presence of Sis' Ann, whose smooth running organ of speech might be compared with the hare (fleeing from a hungry greyhound), Aseneth's fell behind like the inch worm trying to climb a gravel bank.

Sis' Ann's first progressive thought led her to learn with all convenient speed the nature and length of standing of the peddler's deafness; but the peddler was deafer than usual, and Plym had the great satisfaction of witnessing Sis' Ann's sore defeat, for, although she shouted and screamed and grew hot and red in the face, nothing suited to her mind could be wrung out of the peddler.

"I-I t-tell ye," suggested Plym, who was loth to leave such an entertaining part, but he must help his uncle do the chores, "I-I've heered t-tell's he-heow er d-deef man ca-can't hear s-so well er'n em-empty st-stomick, an' thet t-ther best wa-way ter m-make'm t-talk's ter gi-give'm su-suthin' ter eat. Er d-deef man k-kin hear er d-deal bet-better af-after eatin'! Ye'd bet-better haw-haul off t-till he's hed s-some sup-puper! He-he must gi-git pow-wow-ful hungry er hump-pump-in' rou-roun' t-ther ken-kentry! He-heow f-fur ye b-ben ter d-day?" shouted Plym in the peddler's ear.

"Wal, nigh's I kin calkerlate, somethin' less'n twenty-five mile up an' deown, an' over er purty stiff kind o' er rud, tew, 'specially roun' Bumpskittle Ten Acre, an' Crook Back Hill an' in ther Pestle Mortor Deestrict."

Sis' Ann declared that she would "git suthin' outer thet ol' peddler ef thar was anythin' in 'm wuth gittin'," and after supper the engagement, the battle of words, began. Archelaus studied his paper thoughtfully; the habitual smile that always pulled at the corners of his mouth had been conquered and was held in subjection by a stiff pucker—always a sign that the smile was rampant and mutinous and inclined to spread out to the danger line of laughter; Aseneth was silent and perhaps heard the first time the click of her own knitting needles; when the Columbiad speaks, the puny pop of the musket is not heard and might as well retire if execution by sound is the object; Plym was in his favorite attitude—on the settle, lying on his stomach and heels in the air, and a broad grin bunching up his cheeks. Stump was in attendance, subdued and one eye on the enemy. While Stump had the run of all buildings and might warm his toes by the kitchen fire when he pleased, yet, strange as it may appear, he seldom entered the house except when strangers were at the farm. Plym said Stump liked to see and hear as well as other folks. But Rebecca, like the race of mankind suggested by her name, was in banishment, voluntary, but necessary under the circumstances—relegated to the duty of an ordinary barn cat.

Years before, Rebecca, now in the sere and yellow age of fourteen, had a serious misunderstanding with Sis' Ann, and no reconciliation had yet smoothed her path of life. And now instead of singing her low purr tune in the broad lap of Aseneth or cuddling in the

feather cushion of the rocking chair, Rebecca wandered desolate during the night watch in the dark passages of the barn, and by day sat expectant with her best eye screwed to a knot hole in the barn, watching the lane that led to the highway to catch the first glimpse of the departing guest.

"Like peddlin'?" screamed Sis' Ann, addressing the peddler. This was the first gun and Stump prudently crept under the settle to be near Plym in case the enemy became dangerously demonstrative.

"Yus'm," replied the peddler meekly.

" 'Spose ye git purty tired er trampin' roun'?"

"Yus'm!"

"Folks treat ye well?"

"Yus'm; tolruble, gin'r'ally!"

"Dew much tradin' ter day?"

"No'm!"

"Kinder hard ter git erlong, seein' ye're so deef?"

"Yus'm!"

"Whar'd ye sell ther most?"

"Don't know's I kin tell ye, ma'am, whar I sell ther most; but I kin tell ye whar I did ther littlest bit o' tradin', an' thet was roun' Corymuckle Basin, an' over thar in ther Three Maids Cove; an' business was dreffle dull erlong ther Sorrowin' Joe Rud up Elderbush Hill an' deown ter Thorney Brook. An' o' all ther spyin', beatin' deown, almost stealin' folks, them Thorney Brookers be ther wust I ever see—er mile on ther wrong side o' ther Tumbletowners, an', Good Hevings! ther Tumbletowners is bad 'nough; but they is angels with harps in ther han' an' crowns o' gol' on ther heads 'long side o' them pinch me, squeeze ev'rybody Thorney Brookers. Why—"

"Er purty man ye be!" shouted Sis' Ann, "ter be er

runnin' deown yer betters! Ther nicest people in ther worl' live right roun' Thorney Brook! My ansisters—"

"Why," continued the peddler, not hearing Sis' Ann's interruption or the end of it, in a lower tone, "a woman with er cast in her eye, an' er black patch on her chin, jest tried ter trade me er lame calf fer er red an' blue peacock dress pattern; an' when I said 'twan't noways agree'ble er handy ter take erlong er lame calf in my travels, 'though er lame one might be er leetle easier ter manage'n reel four-legged animil—when I tol' her thet, she got terrubly uptous. I hed jest time ter git eout 'fore she let ther dog loose. But—"

"Ef I'd er ben thar," said Sis' Ann in an undertone, "I'd hed thet dog eout quicker'n thet an' sot'm on ye!" And then to the peddler, she screamed, "Ye needn't waste no more breath er runnin' deown ther folks ther which ye ain't scusly thumb high tew! Eour ansisters—"

"But," continued the peddler, giving his voice an upward hitch, "ther most despairin' kind o' luck just took me by ther neck on ther east side o' Thorney Brook in er place called Chipmonk Holler. Et happed las' summer when ther ruds was terrubly dry an' vittles skurse as they allus is in Thorney Brook deestrict, leastwise I never got er sight o' any, much less er taste of'm! 'Twas jest erbeout tew 'clock, an' I hedn't er bite o' nothin' sence arly mornin'. I knocked on ther door o' er ramshackle kind o' er place, fust gently, then loud 'nough ter be heered over ter Poverty Back Door, er settlement erbeout tew mile ter ther east, or over ter Kingdom Come Village on ther west.

"Bimeby, I heered er voice 'way back in ther buildin' somewhars an' et said, 'What ye want?'

" 'Lookin' fer dinner!'

"'Dinner! Ye won't git no dinner here!'

"'''Cause why?'

"'''Cause thar ain't none! I ain't hed no dinner sence day erfore yisterday! Ye'll hev ter travel furder!'

"'What'd ye git ter live on?'

"'Aain't er livin' more'n helf.'

"'Wal,' says I, 'can't ye come eout, an' let me see what ye look like? I got some dreffle nice things ter show ye! I'm er sellin' erway deown low fer ther cash!'

"'Don't want none o' yer things! Clar eout!'

"Jest then er winder over ther door riz up an' er woman's head come eout. She wore glasses an' squinted. 'What ye after?' she says.

"'Lookin' fer er dinner, an' willing ter dew er leetle dickerin' fer't!'

"'What ye got ter sell?'

"'Ermost ev'rything in ther notion line—pins, needles, twist, buttons, combs, fishhooks, Jews harps, Yankee soap, yarn—'

"'What'd ye want fer dinner?'

"'Anythin' season'b'le, ma'am! I ain't over pertic'lar! Ermost anythin' good! I'll give ye er good trade!'

"'Wal, I guess I kin scare up suthin'.'

"'Thank ye, ma'am!'

"Then ther man's voice I heered fust 'way back somewhars spoke up an' says, 'What's she say?'

"'Says she's ergoin' ter git me er dinner.'

"'Wal, she ain't!'

"'What's he say?' said the woman.

"'Says ye can't git me no dinner!'

"'Tell'm shet up.'

"I tol' 'm so.

"'Ye ol' hulkin' peddler! I'll come eout an' thump ye! Ye can't sass me thet er way!'

"'What's he say?' asked ther woman.

"'Says he's er comin' eout ter thump me!'

"'He dassent,' says she.

"'What's she say?' says ther man.

"'Says ye dassent.'

"'I'll show ye, ye ol' scundrul! I'll jump all over ye!' an' I heered er gret racket inside o' ther house. But he didn't come eout.

"'D'ye like berries an' milk?' says ther woman.

"'Yus'm!'

"'Wal, ef ye'll help pick ther berries, I'll trade with ye.'

"'Ma'am, ef I hev ter git my own dinner, I'll hev ter charge fer't! I can't give ye sech er slick trade! Heow fur erway be ther berries?'

"'Right back o' ther house in ther paster; an' while we're 'beout et we'll pick 'nough fer er batch o' pies.'

"' 'Spose ye got plenty o' milk?'

"'Yis, I hev! But et's in ther paster, tew. Ye'll hev ter help me corner up er keow an' keep off ther flies while I milk her—'

"'Ma'am,' says I perlitely's I could under them air sarcumstances, 'I'll bid ye good arternoon! Ye'll hev ter pick yer own berries fer thet batch o' pies, an' keep ther flies off yerself!'

"'What, ye won't trade? Ye're'n ol' humbug-er loafin' consarn! Drat ye! Ye want briled chucken an' lamb's tongues an' 'isters'n ther helf shell an' little neck clams er crawlin' all over ye! I'll come deown ter ye, ye ol' good fer nothin' poke!' an' her head went in, an' I heered her er comin'. Then ther man's voice yelled, 'I knowed ye wouldn't git no dinner! She's arter ye!'

"She stood in ther door way an' shouted, 'Ye dassent come back!' An' I said, 'No, I dassent!' Then I got erway quick's I could travel! Thet'll show ye what kind o' folks them Thorney Brookers is. But—"

"Ye ol' misrepresentin' thing!" exclaimed Sis' Ann vehemently. "I tell ye, ther nicest people in ther worl' live in Thorney Brook! I don't b'lieve er word ye say! Ye orter be took up fer tellin' sech stories! Ye ordachis traipsin' peddler! Ef my ansisters—"

"I see er man over in Sodom," the peddler proceeded to say, "jest on tother side o' the crik from Gommorrer an' the Devil's Pocket, an' he said ther best thing ter dew with them thar Thorney Brookers was ter build er high Chiny wall roun' the place an' fence'm all in. Thet would save expense an' be ther safest fer ther kentry—"

"I won't listun ter sech talkin' an' er pack o' lies. Me'n 'Senth was brung up right roun' Thorney Brook an' eour ansisters was ther fust ter settle thar; an' they an' all thet come arte'm was ther nicest people in ther hull kentry roun'! Ther idee o' thet man from thet shack o' er place—thet Sodom—er talkin' ther like o' thet 'beout Thorney Brook! I wonder, 'Seneth, thet ye'll harbor sech er man's this peddler!"

But Aseneth was silent and the peddler, now that he had trodden on the toes of the "ansisters," held his peace and could not be induced to give further account of his travels, although Plym called loudly for more. The next day the peddler staid till dinner, through the influence of Plym, and late in the afternoon, set out for the Carley Farm.

CHAPTER XVIII.

JACK CARLEY AND HIS THREE YEAR OLD.

The old peddler, now known to the reader as Stanley Bruce, limped slowly up to the Carley Mansion about five o'clock in the afternoon and knocked gently on the porch door. Jack Carley responded immediately, remarking before he opened the door as he fumbled with the bolt, "Who in the devil's poking around, now!" "O, it's you, is it, you—!" he exclaimed as he opened the door, his shaggy eyebrows coming together in knots and his mustache curling up to meet and to emphasize a sneer.

Jack led the way, however, without further comment to the kitchen where Hitty was preparing supper. She stopped in her work to see and to admire the dress pattern procured for her in the city. Spreading it out and holding it up against her, she exclaimed to Jack, "I declare, when I get it made up, I can go to church!" Jack sneered.

"Is there anything else you want?" asked Jack almost savagely. "Pick it out quick and let the old fool go!" Hitty did not dare to raise her eyes, for Jack's keen gaze took in everything. She selected some trifle and Jack paid for all. "That's all!" shouted Jack to the peddler.

"I thought, mebby, ye mought let me stay over night," said the peddler in a tremulous voice. "When I was here erfore ye said—"

"We don't keep a hotel!" shouted Jack, and in a lower tone, he said, "Don't want you round, anyway!"

Jack was in an ugly humor, evidently, from some

cause; something had stroked him the wrong way, making prominent the rough side of his character; although all sides were rugged, yet he could put on fine manners occasionally. The peddler took up his pack and moved out into the hall when Hitty spoke in his behalf.

"Seems too bad to turn him out! You said he might stay, and he's made his plans to stay!"

"Suppose we'll have to keep him, then!" said Jack with an oath. "But it's the last time! Hullo, old Grizley! You can stay!"

"I'm 'bleeged ter ye! I was kinder expectin' ter stop 'long o' ye, fer ye said's much when I was here erfore! But I dew hope I aint er givin' ye'n ther lady no trouble!"

As discovered afterward, Jack was in a dilemma at that moment. Aleck was the better of the two, indeed, "not half bad," according to some persons, away from the influence of Jack, but he had acquired a great thirst for strong drink. With cider he was content, or was obliged to be, most of the time and was not often intoxicated, but occasionally cider had not the proper nip and satisfying bite sufficient to suit his appetite, and he obtained from Jim Lambert's groggery more fiery stuff, brought it to the farm, and forthwith gave all his attention to its immediate and speedy consumption.

Under such circumstances, Aleck became irresponsible and dangerous to himself—liable to fall into the well as he drank from the bucket on the curb, or to climb onto the scaffold of the barn and come down through the scuttle. When the peddler arrived, Aleck was uproarious in the barn, and insensible to every instinct of sober man. Jack must watch over him to see that he came to no harm, and he did not like the idea of leaving Hitty with the peddler; he might not suspect the

peddler, but he was not sure about Hitty, knowing, probably, that she was looking for an opportunity to free herself from the bonds that held her. Jack could not lock her in her room, for he wanted his supper, which she was now preparing. He sat a few minutes glaring first at the peddler and then at Hitty; and he fidgeted and squirmed, for Aleck might be in the well by this time or sliding off the hay mow on to the sharp tines of a pitchfork. He arose abruptly and rushed out; Hitty understood him and his movements; she turned to the peddler and said, "Be careful! He won't be gone long!"

"Are you ready to go?"

"Yes!"

"Have you much to carry?"

"No; only a bundle! There's a great many things in this house that belong to me. It hurts me to leave everything! But that don't matter if I can get away! When are you going?"

"Tomorrow night, that is, Monday morning—"

"O, if you could go tonight! Aleck's sick and that's one less!"

"Wish we could; but too late to change; plans made for Monday morning!"

"Sh! Here comes Jack!"

Jack came in, sat a few minutes and was out again. "What's the matter with Aleck?" asked the peddler.

"O, he's been drinking too much! Poor boy! O, it's terrible! Aleck's not naturally bad! He was the gentlest, kindest boy when he was little! He might have been a good man if he'd been led right!"

"Who's the new man—the night man?"

"O, I don't know—I don't know anything about him! How'd you know there was a new man?"

"Plym told me! Is he large or small?"

"I don't know! I haven't seen him!"

Jack came in again and supper was ready. After supper he hurried out again, but was gone only a minute. Jack was in no mood to hear stories and the peddler wisely held his peace; he fidgeted still, and was growing more nervous and ill at ease. At last, he lighted a candle and bade the peddler follow him. Thus early was the peddler locked in his room out of harm's way, where at least he could not be communicated with by Hitty, if there was any intention. But it was too early to court sleep on that rugged bed, and, now, while Jack had so much on his mind, was the time to communicate with the prisoner, and also to give some attention to the new man who acted as night guard. He placed the bed against the door and wedged it with the bedslats as before. The curtain of the window of the porch was up, and, trying the window, the peddler found that the lower sash could be raised easily and noiselessly.

Probably the new watchman, the proverbial new broom, would be as vigilant as the old one, and perhaps more active in the discharge of his duty. The first thing to do was to warn the prisoner of his intended rescue on the following night. Through Plym, he had been notified, but the exact time had not been set. Whether the peddler should attempt the passage of the chimney now or later, was a question; but there was little choice; Jack might be engaged with Aleck, but the night man would be as watchful one time as another. To be sure of the window, he took a small gimlet from his pocket and drove it into the upper sash above the lower.

The peddler opened the closet door with the bedslat, passed the chimney, wedged the door leading to the room opposite, listened for any movement, slipped the

bolt of the long closet, and passed to the door of the prisoner's room. The light of the old man's candle came into the closet through the wide crack in the door at the bottom; through the wide aperture of the door, the peddler saw the old man sitting upon his work bench and reading a book spread out on his knee; there was no sound save the ticking of the clock. Should the peddler enter the room? If the room had neither curtains nor blinds, might he be seen from the outside if the night watchman or other keeper looked that way?

The peddler lifted the latch; that was enough; the movement caught the old man's ear; he sprang up and came to the door and opened it an inch. "I can come no further!" said the old man, "my chain will not let me; I can unlock it, but I'm afraid to do so now. My night fetters have not been put on yet, and I must not be caught out of my chains."

"Can anyone see into your room from the outside?"

"Yes. That's the reason I do not open the door wider."

"Come to the closet, where you came last Saturday night. On Monday morning at half past twelve—"

"You'll help me away?"

"Yes!"

"God bless you!"

"I cannot stay! Someone may be watching! Remember the time—half past twelve, Monday morning! I have a full suit of clothing for you including underclothing. You can put them on in the closet! We must get away by one o'clock!"

"Yes, yes! Heaven bless you for this! I want to talk with you! Shall I come to the closet at midnight to-night?"

"Yes; but be wary!"

The peddler returned to his room, took the gimlet from the window sash and made himself comfortable to watch and to wait, and to try the mettle of the outside watchman. There was no moon yet, but the sky was unclouded and the stars twinkled through the frosty air; the open space around the house was dark as a pocket, but the dead grass and weeds made a light background if darker objects came between.

About ten o'clock the figure of a man appeared moving out from the house to the fringe of the forest, and, turning abruptly, looked up; he appeared to be a man of medium stature and build, but in the darkness only the outline against the gray stubble was discernible; it occurred to the peddler that this man in outline, general bulk and movement much resembled the one he had seen before. But the man was looking up, and now was the peddler's opportunity to test the zeal and attention to business of the new watchman. He struck a match behind the headboard of the bed and let it flare up; still another match creaked and its light illuminated the room. When the glare of the third match struggled up through the darkness, the night watcher walked toward the house and the peddler heard the squeak of the ladder against the roof of the porch. Now the man was on the porch, and now the peddler took from his pocket a pipe; and when the watchman, now on the porch roof, looked into the room with one eye, he saw the peddler sitting on a barrel and striking the fourth match to light his pipe. The man was satisfied, evidently, and retired.

The object of this play was to determine, if possible, whether the new watchman would run to Jack Carley or investigate for himself if anything attracted his attention to the peddler's room. The peddler now had no

more interest in the movements of the agile sentinel who could climb porches so easily, with the help of a ladder, and walk with the stealthy tread of a cat. The next event was the visit of the Carley prisoner to his self appointed rescuer; he was coming at midnight, but the peddler regretted that he had consented to the arrangement, for sleep beckoned to him, and, the bed, despite the full grown carbuncles in it, had attraction for the man who had met in open field such an aggressor as Sis' Ann, and who had spent the night following listening to Plym, comparing notes and perfecting plans.

Ha, the old man was coming! He had learned to stalk and creep—to walk on the tips of his toes—as well as the crafty fellow outside. So noiselessly does he approach, that only the ear expecting and listening intently, could detect it. The peddler had prepared to receive his midnight guest in the closet by the warm chimney. The gimlet was driven into the sash again—not necessary, perhaps, but every precaution possible against surprise, must not be disregarded. In the bed was arranged the peddler's pack, valise and some moth-eaten grain sacks found in one of the barrels in the room to take the form of a man; his overcoat, the "yaller" beauty that excited Aseneth's wrath, of unfashionable cut and length, was thrown over all, covering the place where the sleeper's head ought to be.

If the spying sentinel should throw in his flash of light, he would be no wiser, for the dummy in the bed is of good form and cannot be aroused by any probing ray of light the watcher may send in to pierce the darkness; and if he have any sense of accommodation and philanthropy, he will not disturb a weary man in sound and restful slumber. The Carley prisoner was at the closet door; the peddler threw back the bolt with the

aid of the bed slat, entered the closet and closed the door behind him. The man with the searchlight would be surprised if he saw the closet door open or ajar.

Leaning against the warm chimney, the Carley prisoner told his story in soft, merely audible whisper. The peddler declared afterward that he never suffered such torture before. To hear what the old man said—to listen, in the dark, to a story of heartless, monstrous wrong and cruelty when the flash of eye, even the blanched cheek and the set jaw could not express the horror of the mind—when only a whispering breath of denunciation could come to relieve, was torture to the strong-limbed, strong-minded, justice-loving peddler.

The note secured by the intrepid Plym, told a part of the story briefly, begat suspicions and sent them drifting in a certain direction; but this—this revelation, if true, and the peddler believed it implicitly, was so ugly, so full of fiendish cruelty and low treachery, so terrible in all its bearings, that it exasperated the peddler almost to insubordination with himself—to that state of determination and righteous wrath that might almost prompt a man with a revolver in hand to march boldly up to principals and agents and demand instant satisfaction.

At length the prisoner returned to his room, and the peddler aroused the dummy from his quiet repose and took his place in the bed; but little sleep came to a mind busy with the revolting history. The revelation had come at the right time, on the eve of the attempted rescue to nerve the peddler's arm. Let come what might, he feared nothing, not even the Carleys' cold lead; and in his chilly bed, under the moth-eaten corn sacks, he grew hot as he cast up the infamous account and found the criminal balance.

"O!" exclaimed the peddler, addressing the dummy,

"If I can get to the end of this day like a gentle, soft wooled lamb, with the wolf within, demanding to be let free to fly at the throats of the rascals, we'll begin a reckoning which, if it stumble into no snares or snarls, as it ought not by right, will provide new workmen for the state—the kind that appear to the best advantage when framed in stone walls and iron bars for the benefit of honest people!"

The morning was spent till ten o'clock before the peddler's jailor, Mr. Jack Carley, released his guest. After unlocking the door, Jack went below without a word; his countenance was sullen and his step heavy. Was this a good sign, or did it suggest dismissal after breakfast? If Aleck was still in the grip of waters too strong for him, and if Jack was on the anxious seat in regard to Hitty, would he (Jack) buckle down to the trying labor of watching the three through the slow hours of Sunday?

But Aleck was at breakfast looking like a man who had been active in a hard fought battle and barely escaped with his life; there was nothing to fear from him—no interference of his mind or body would be an obstacle. After breakfast, Aleck dozed by the fire limp as a rag, and Jack disappeared. As nothing was said about the peddler's tarrying, he lighted his pipe, having the consent of the lady of the house, and the morning wore away and the time crept on. Mr. Jeremy Shadler appeared and Hitty fled as from the approach of vermin.

Jack Carley had now recovered his spirits, owing, perhaps, to the fact that Aleck had been kept out of the well, and, also, to the fact that fine bottled cider was on tap and aging (if it had a chance) in the cellar. Aleck aroused and made an attempt at cheerfulness in spite of the weight of weariness upon him, for the benefit, prob-

ably, of the free and easy gentleman of the name of Shadler. Jack and Shadler immediately retired to the cellar for another sample of what he called his "three-year-old"—a kicking brand of bottled apple juice.

Soon the two worthies reappeared more jovial and sociable than before. Jack carried a quart bottle and taking a large tumbler from the cupboard, filled it to the rim and handed to the peddler who sat blinking thoughtfully into the fire on the settle, remarking in a low tone, "We'll have a little fun with the old beggar! But it does hurt me to waste any of this prime three year old by pouring it into such an old hulk! Shad, he can talk faster and lie more than any man you ever saw when he's sober, and we'll see what his tongue can do when my three-year-old oils it up—well's see how quick it can throw him!"

As he handed the glass to the peddler—at that moment exactly—a loud, impatient knocking sounded on the front door. Callers were unusual, probably, especially those who had the audacity to make such an uproar. Jack answered the summons, and Shadler followed; and Aleck, also, limped into the hall as fast as his rickety legs would carry him. The peddler, spry as a rabbit, despite his years and apparent decrepitude, sprang up, poured the cider in the glass and that in the bottle into the sink. Jack told the man at the door who enquired about a carriage way through the woods that if it were not Sunday and if he were not in a hurry to go to church, he would wring his neck for taking such liberty with that front door. When the trio came back to the kitchen laughing at Jack's fine wit, they found the peddler holding the bottle on one knee, the empty glass in the other and humming a tune, keeping time with his feet and smacking his lips.

Jack took the bottle and the glass and grinned when he held the bottle up to the light and saw that it was empty. "The d——d old guzzler! He'd gulp a barrel! One glass would liven him up, unhitch his tongue, although it's limber enough, now; but a whole bottle will make him sodden and stupid! By —! that I should waste my precious three-year-old in such a sewer! But, Shad, we can talk now! The old fool is out of the way —he couldn't be safer under ground! Shad, there's nothing so deaf as a deaf man dead drunk and sound asleep as he'll be in about a minute and a half."

The peddler made several attempts to address the company—let fly some inarticulate sentences, but finally his drooning and humming stopped, his head fell on his breast, and he toppled over and laid at full length on the settle in a comfortable posture and occasionally blowing a bugle note to announce that deep sleep had overcome him. But if, according to Jack, nothing could be so deaf as a deaf man drunk and asleep, why was it necessary to lower the voice when he touched upon matters that might feed the curiosity of the peddler. Certainly Hitty, also deaf and daily growing worse, could not hear with an oak door between. But men of craft, stealth and steeped in wickedness, even in solitude, skulk behind their own thoughts; the guilty soul seared with crime, weighed down by its own product, is a coward with only itself to keep it company.

Two great rascals were Mr. Jeremy Shadler and Mr. Jack Carley—about the same calibre of ruffians; their thoughts ran in parallel channels; the speech of one was nearly the copy of the other; two black peas out of the same pod of iniquity.

"Now," said Mr. Jeremy Shadler, draining his glass as he looked through the bottom of it to the ceiling,

"what have you to say, Jack Carley, about that hell scrape? What was it dropped on me out of that tree—thunderbolt, man, beast, thing or the Devil himself? He had fists or hoofs anyway as hard as fence rocks and laid them on like a steam hammer! He or it must have weighed a ton, judging from the way it came down! Have you any idea, Jack, what it means?"

"Not a hooter! But we've got Milo again!"

"What! By ———! Bring him down! No; I'll jump on him in his bed! Some pal of his—"

"No, it wasn't! Keep your seat, Shad, and let your hair lie down and rest! When the carriage got onto the pike, Milo skipped out and skulked in Mottle's orchard till treed by that yelping cur of Plym's. In the tree, Milo says, he cut and trimmed a club, and, then driving off the dog and nearly braining him, got into Mottle's meal bin to have a nap till daylight—"

"A d——d pretty story! Some pal of his—"

"I say no, and if you'll wedge your weather eye open and let your brain kick itself clear, you'll see something. Now, fasten to this and tie up your tongue while I make it plain to you: If the man who dropped on you and made you see new moons and stars, was a pal of Milo's, do you suppose Milo would have left the carriage? If he lies and did not leave it, why did they quit the team when they could push on till the horses dropped in their tracks, with seven hours darkness before them? And there's no doubt Milo did leave the carriage where he said he did; if he had left it where we found it, he would not have been skulking around Mottle's Farm—"

"He's a d——d liar! How do you know he was around the Mottle Farm? He can lie like—"

"Let your flip-flap tongue coddle itself a minute! After you drove away with the carriage, Aleck and I

went hunting for Milo. Plym's dog was howling and we knew something was moving there. Toward morning when it was time for old Mottle to do his milking, Aleck went over to Pike Staff Road, while I mounted guard under Beetle Crag. It was lucky for us that Milo made his nest in a meal bin, for when old Mottle begun to rattle around, Milo took to his heels and made for cover in Hokopokonoket Swamp. You were in no laughing mood, at that time, Shad, with one eye in a mourning frill, a big spavin lately grown behind one ear, and your jaw cockbilled and canted toward some of those new stars you saw when the Devil or something tried his knuckles or hoofs on you—"

"No more of that! Go on with your story and be d——d to you!"

"I was going to say, my dear Shad," continued Jack, laughing at his own wit, "that you would have laughed, if in the mood for laughing, to see Milo sprint over the fields. You know he can't run any more than Aleck's three-legged nag with two dozen things the matter with him. But to see him try his legs was worth more than any race I ever saw at the fair. He was white as chalk all over from rolling in the meal bin and as easy to follow as a ghost with a lantern. In the swamp we nabbed him, and he's on duty again as good as new!"

"If it was not one of Milo's pals, who in the Devil, or what was it that tree shed on me?"

"Whisper that to some of those stars you saw for the first time! But it's a great mystery! There's something about it that makes me uncomfortable; it was the Devil's patchwork, but by ———! it was slick!"

"Should say it was! 'Twould't seem quite so slick to you, Mr. Jack Carley, if the Devil's hoofs had played on your topknot!"

Jack laughed and rested his head on the back of the chair as he relapsed into boisterous merriment. "Aleck, bring another bottle! Shad, I'd give an eagle to have seen that thumping! I told Hitty we had a new man to do the night dodging for this reason: As she's out of joint with this business, as you know, but don't dare to squeal, she might think, if we changed watchmen occasionally, that everything was o. k.—or why trust the secret to so many? See? Shad, if you had my head on your shoulders—"

"I wish I'd had it the other night! If you have such a wonderful head on your shoulders, will you stir round and find out what kind of fruit grows on that tree in one night; and if any more of the kind is likely to drop, put your own fine crop of wool under it and see how you like it!"

"But," said Jack, pouring another bumper of the three year-old, "this little skirmish with the Devil, painful as it was to you, my dear Shad, must help us and lead us up to a pile of money. The time is ripe; the iron is hot and we must strike before it cools. When our trees around here, heretofore respectable, as you suggest, Shad, have begun to shed such queer fruit on the unsuspecting head of a gentleman of the name of Shadler—thunderbolts, kicking mules with shoes on, trip hammers with steam attachment, or something that can drive two horses on the run in pitch darkness, through a narrow and crooked lane without grazing a hub, or barking a tree, and carefully hitches the horses and tucks them up in their blankets—when such things come to pass, Shad, it must be evident to an observing mind like yours, that spies are abroad, and that it is time to set the danger signal and to hedge our interests in. A spirit of enquiry has

put on legs, and, according to your account, very hard knuckles, and perches in trees.

"Now is the time to bring to a head the little matter we've had in mind for some time. Right away quick, Shad, even tomorrow you must see Master Dog or Mistress Cat, his charming wife, that beautiful woman with the bewitching eyes—beautiful as well as bewitching to anyone who admires snakes—and give them my most sincere and ever blooming compliments so long as the cash comes prompt—and say to them, individually or collectively, as best suits your fancy, that he was off again, not long ago (although he wasn't), that he is getting so slippery and determined owing to the fact that he still clings to the insane idea that he is not insane, that he is continually slipping through our fingers like an eel (although he is not) in spite of night watchmen and the whole of us, that somebody or something has an eye or a whole dozen of them on us, perches in trees and in the most impolite and ungentlemanly way falls like a big loaded cocoanut on the head of our esteemed—"

"Enough of that!"

"Say to them, Shad, that we are pining to skeletons to be released (although we are not) from further responsibility; that something must be decided forthwith or we shall unbolt, throw wide the door and let him go (although we shall not). Shad," continued Jack, lowering his voice, "the time for final drive has come! If it comes to"—here Jack drew his hand across his throat—"then send the threat home to their hardened hearts, as the preacher saith, in your own convincing and persuasive way! And, Shad, score high—not less than a double V with three ciphers behind it! Begin tomorrow and come quick with any news. I can't leave here

now, and your manner of living is too high for Aleck; you treat him so well, I do not dare to send him down to partake of your generous hospitality. Tuesday night, Shad, I shall look hard for you! Don't forget to give my warmest regards to Mistress Cat! If you could get her photograph for me, Shad, you'll do the farm a good turn. I'd hang her picture in the cornbarn; never a rat or mouse would dare come a second time! Now, if we want any supper, we must give Hitty a chance to get it. Unlock the door, Aleck, and then we'll call on our mutual friend and enquire about his health so that you can make report, Shad, to your amiable superior officer, Mistress Cat."

The three rascals went out laughing on their way to the room of the prisoner to torment their victim according to the belief of Hitty. As soon as they disappeared, Hitty came out of her room with that cautious look and step that had become habitual; the peddler recovered his normal sense quickly, and Hitty came near and whispered:

"By standing on a chair and listening at the crack at the top of the door of my room, I can hear a good deal. I was in hopes you wouldn't drink—"

"I didn't! I poured it all into the sink when they ran to the door!"

"O, and you heard every word?"

"Yes; but I'm not sober yet. When supper's ready, you'll have to shake me! Look for Plym at one o'clock! He'll tell you what to do!"

Jack had a merry time in waking up the peddler and in trying to convince him that his staggering legs would support him. "Serves you right, you old imbecile," muttered Jack, "for making a swill tub of yourself and drinking liquor too good for you. A little richness

knocks some men straight! Well, stay there, then, you drunken sot," exclaimed Jack, giving the peddler a push that caused him to collapse in a heap on the settle, after several ineffectual attempts to gain his feet with Jack's help.

"I won't see the old man abused!" exclaimed Hitty, coming forward and looking upon Jack with flashing eyes. When supper was ready, Hitty poured a cup of tea and placed it on a chair near the settle where the peddler could help himself; the peddler managed to pour a part of it down his throat, but a greater part over his clothing to the great merriment of Jack and Aleck. Hitty also placed before him a plate of doughnuts, cheese, and apple pie; and, under this treatment, he began to revive and once more to grasp his faculties; but the return to sobriety was slow so that neither Jack nor Aleck might think it necessary to neglect their duties. But they remained in the kitchen, and at last the peddler, able to swing his legs with tolerable accuracy, was locked in his room again and the last act in the preliminary skirmish was over.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RESCUE OF THE CARLEY PRISONER.

The night wind, keen and piercing, kept at half quick step by the forest's sturdy opposition, escapes at last from the monotonous and sullen growling of the broad oak and the tall pignut (as the last remnant of clothing yields to this hurrying tramp), and with a bound, stretching its wings in the cleared place, fell upon the Carley mansion, with renewed vigor, whistling merrily as it frolicked in the nooks and crannies and tripped softly through the cracks and loop holes of the crumbling structure, compelling the aged peddler, crowned with years and partly clad in a yellow coat, to creep into bed with his clothes on; but not to sleep; rather to satisfy and appease the man who has learned to climb porches with a bull's eye lantern in his hand.

There he is! He threw in his spying ray of light and let it rest a moment upon the recumbent form of the peddler. He saw nothing, evidently, to stir his thinking powers out of their normal channel and retired as noiselessly as he came. The clock struck twelve; the peddler arose and took out of his pack, underclothing, a suit, and an overcoat, together with a soft felt hat. Collar, necktie and cuffs did not appear, for this was not to be a dress party or an excursion for mere pleasure, although much pleasure was expected to come from it. The peddler sprung the lock of the closet door and placed the clothing within the closet for the prisoner,

who was soon to be a free man if the Carleys kept to their beds and dreams and no obstacle appeared.

The Carley prisoner could not make headway against the sharp-edged breeze now at large and roaming up and down, in his prison dress, for he wore only trousers and shirt—not a shoe or stocking or vest or coat made a part of his wardrobe. In cold weather, he kept warmth within him by wrapping bed clothes around him; the fire was supposed to be sufficient and it might have been if he had kept awake during the night to replenish it, and the shirking Aleck had not forgotten often, especially when in his cups, to supply fuel.

Hark! The old man is coming! He is in the closet now and there is a glimmer of light under the door; on his knees, the peddler looked into the closet to make sure that no other man is prowling there; yes, it is he; he has lighted a candle end to help him dress. The peddler now in the angle, with the help of his own bull's eye, examined a pair of handcuffs and another device of queer shape and construction; it was a gag taken from a criminal by Captain Bonny's own hand and loaned for this occasion; it will go into any mouth large or small and buckles behind the head over the ears; it is harmless; it will allow the gagged man a chance to breath through his nose, the way every man of any account ought to breath all the time; if the man who makes the acquaintance of this gag has been so lazy and shiftless as to allow his nose to get the upper hand and lead him, whether he will or no, with one or both nostrils closed, so much the worse for him.

The peddler behind the headboard of the bed now looked into the open space around the house and over to the big oak accused of unnatural conduct, and the peddler chuckled softly at the thought of this tree's produc-

ing another crop on this very night. He moved the slide of the bull's eye and a streak of light tripped across the dry stubble, not upon the maligned oak, but across and back the yard in a twinkling. Sh! There is a movement in the porch below; the night dodger is awake and alert; immediately a dark form strides across the stubble, turns and looks up. The peddler gives him another shot—a little prod of light right in the eye; the man rubs his eyes and hastens toward the house; he is surprised and will know immediately what it means; the grating of the ladder on the eaves of the porch is not so gentle as before, for the climber is in haste. The man is now on the roof—now at the window; he throws his light into the room; he sees no one in the bed, and he cannot see the peddler as he is flattened against the wall by the window.

The floor of the room is lower than the window sill, even with the roof of the porch, and the way to enter from the porch is to thrust in foot first; but the watchman may have doubts; he is coming head first; he cannot raise the window and hold it up, and help himself and hold the lantern at the same time and have both hands free; he raises the window, places the lantern, now closed on the sill, and on his knees thrusts in his head and shoulders; now as the back holds up the sash, he pauses and reaches for the lantern, and at the same time the peddler reaches for him like a giant let loose. With a pillow in his right hand, he lifts up—knocks up the man's head against the window sash, presses him to the side of the window and wedges him against the casing.

At the same time a dark form appears on the roof porch; it falls on the man or that part of him on the roof, pulls his legs from under him, and, according to his

usual practice in similar cases, sits down upon him. The window and Plym are on the man's back and half of him is out and half is in. The peddler applies the gag; it is a good fit; he attaches a handcuff to one wrist and brings the other to meet it; he reaches a pair of cuffs to Plym, who finds that they are of the right size for the man's ankles.

The peddler now drew the man into the room, and, with the help of Plym and cords brought for the purpose, they bound the man to the bed flat on his back in a comfortable position and a pillow under his head. He will be discovered and released soon enough, probably, without leaving him to make a disturbance as he might with even hands and feet tied, if not held down on the bed. Not a word had been uttered and not a sound had been made loud enough to wake a sleeper in that room. Behind the headboard, the peddler grasped Plym's hand, but Plym did not even whisper, as he returned the grip, for the man's ears are not gagged, and Plym's stutter, even in whisper, might disclose what, for prudential reasons, were better kept under cover for the present.

The peddler looked at his watch and exposed the face under the bull's eye to Plym. In the dark, they examined the man on the bed again; he was secure and breathing easy. The bed slat opens the closet door and out came the Carley prisoner. He shook hands with both the peddler and Plym in silence; under the bull's eye they examine the prisoner's suit; it is several sizes too large; but that does not matter; the wearer appears like another man—not an old man at all, not over forty-five or fifty. The peddler showed his watch again to Plym, and Plym descends to meet Hitty. The pantry window is raised and Hitty appeared.

"I can't go, Plym!" Her voice was husky, ending in what sounded like a sob.

"Wh-what d'ye mean?" whispered Plym. "Wh-why can't ye?"

"'Cause it seems like turnin' my back on my own flesh and blood! All night I've been thinking of the old days, Plym, when the boys were little! I promised my brother on his death bed I'd try to be good's a mother to the boys, and the Lord knows I've tried to do for them. I know they've done wrong! I want to get away, but somehow I can't, at the last minute, make up my mind to go. I've had an awful struggle, Plym, but I've decided not to go."

"B-but ye said ye wa-was er fraid t-ter st-stay arter—"

"I am, Plym, almost! But I can't go! I can't, Plym!"

"Wa-wal, Miss Hit-Hitty, ye'll k-keep mum, wo-won't ye?"

"Yes, yes, Plym! Not a word! And thank you a thousand times, Plym! Good bye!"

"Goo-good bye! I-I'll come ter s-see ye p-purty soon!"

Plym returned to the roof of the porch, for the peddler was waiting to see Plym and Hitty pass the big oak before he descended. He helped his companion to a sure foothold on the porch and then led to the ladder. Plym carried the peddler's pack and black bag. On the ground the peddler was holding the ladder as the Carley prisoner, no, the free man, came down. He was three rungs from the bottom when, with a swaying, grinding, splintering sound, the porch fell with a mighty crash.

Now for life and liberty—a hot run through Pignut Lane! No sleeper, even with the three-year-old's clutch upon him, can cling to his pillow after a roaring crash like that; the Carleys must soon pursue. Plym carries

the peddler's trade gear, and the peddler gives his attention to the free man, and, as fast as he can run, they hasten through the woods till they come to a wide cleared place where Ralph Markman Paige and Arthur Wainworth, with carriage and pair, are waiting. As the peddler stepped into the carriage and closed the door behind him, a sense of relief, of exultation came as the first reward for his labors. After all, it was an easy victory—won without a scratch—and now the last act in the rescue—a quick ride to the city.

Plym held the reins and the carriage was passing rapidly on toward the pike when it came to a sudden standstill. The peddler sprang out and heard voices or the sound of them and of loud laughter and revelry. Several persons were approaching slowly. No sound of a vehicle or the tramp of horse could be heard. If the midnight revelers were on foot, there was nothing to fear, probably; but if they were riding, the vehicles could not pass unless one turned into the wood, if indeed that were possible, in the darkness and the trees standing thick almost to the wheel's hub. Plym ran forward to see if the brawlers rode or were on foot, for the way was padded with rank grass and a covering of leaves. Plym reported a horse and buckboard containing four persons approaching; at least, he counted four lighted cigars.

Plym finds an open space in the forest only choked with underbrush that the carriage will pass over, and, taking the horses by the head, backed the carriage into the wood. The buckboard and its roystering crew passed and the way was open again, but the carriage was held fast. In backing into the wood, the rear wheels passed between two small oak trees; the ground was sloping, and, after the wheels had passed the trees, they

slid down hill, bringing one of the trees against the side of the carriage; when the carriage was started, the tree came against the hind axle and wedged in, held fast.

This was a dilemma. The Carleys must have been aroused by the falling porch and would learn soon what had happened; they would pursue by the wood path, thinking naturally that the escaped prisoner would flee under the cover of the wood as long as possible. Five against two, or three, if the gagged man was released, were enough to insure victory in a personal encounter; but such an event must be avoided at any cost. All concerned knew what was at stake, and they knew that Jack Carley would not stop short of violence to blot out evidence of his infamy. It might appear cowardly to run away (and live to fight another day), but the bravest man may show his bravery by retreating and yielding, apparently. During the attempt to free the carriage, the old man stood by and clung trembling to his rescuer, the old peddler, and begged them to leave the carriage and to hasten away.

There was no alternative. In vain Plym and others to help him, tugged, pulled and breathed hard; a light might show where the pinch was, but it might reveal too much and lead the Carleys straight to their game or bring home one of Jack's bullets. The horses were unhitched and the blankets from the carriage thrown over them. Paige mounted one and Wainworth the other, and rode away to Hokopokonoket Swamp, while Plym led the peddler and his companion to the Mottle Farm. Snow was now falling and a sharp, cutting wind was putting on long boots and beginning to blow a gale; before they reached the farm, the rain began to come with

the snow, and rain, hail, snow and a mixture called sleet, made life up-hill and laborious.

When they approached the farmhouse, Plym ran forward to muzzle Stump lest his bark might attract the Carleys, and led his bedraggled and dripping friends to his own room. All were drenched and chilled to the marrow; but, unmindful of self, Plym tucked them in his warm bed and covered with blankets; locking the door and his friends in, Plym, after changing his coat for a dry one, set out for Hokopokonoket Swamp to guide Paige and Wainworth to a sheltered place where they could remain till daylight came. At the Mottle Farm was hospitality for all, but it was not considered wise to take anything there that could not be concealed; the Carleys, in spite of Stump, might explore, and, finding strange horses in the barn, come to rash conclusions.

In a grove of hemlocks, where the storm hardly penetrated, in the carriage blankets, one for each horse and man, Paige and Wainworth smoked their pipes in comfort and waited for the dawn. Plym returned to the farm, looked into his room and found his guests in sound sleep; in the cook room he built a fire and changed his clothing and began to rehearse the story he must tell his uncle and aunt. Plym had been ordered to rise early enough to build the kitchen fire and thus save his uncle the pangs of rheumatism that were now occasionally making free with his stalwart frame, but not often had he been able to shake off sleep in time to be of any service; but now Plym would redeem part of his reputation and do what might help to conciliate his uncle and aunt.

He did not doubt their hospitality and sympathy, but he knew that they belonged to the mind-your-own-business class of people and were adverse to meddling with their neighbors' affairs or taking sides in any family dis-

turbance. About four o'clock Plym began to rattle the kitchen stove; his uncle and aunt slept in the room directly over the kitchen and there was an opening in the ceiling to admit the heat.

"Who's thar?" shouted Aseneth.

"M-me! T-tell Uncle Ark-Ark'lus he kin stay in b-bed's long's he wa-wants ter. I-I'll dew ther milkin'!" He snickered when he heard them talking together in a low voice. He could imagine the complimentary things they were saying about him.

"Yi-yis," soliloquized Plym in response to what his aunt might be saying about him, "I-I kin be d-dreffle goo-good when I-I'm er mind ter be! But I-I wish ye'd gi-git u-pup quick's ye kin, fer I-I'm er git-gittin' p-purty nar-narvous erbeout wh-what I-I got ter tell ye; an' I-I ain't cock-cocksure heow ye'll t-take et! But I-I reckon I-I've got suthin' thet'll je-jest bring ye roun' squar's er brick. I-I je-jest reckon thet'll d-dew et, but I-I dunno fer k-keeps!"

When the fire was roaring and the tea kettle was piping up, Plym seized the milk pails and ran to the barn; the milking was done when his uncle appeared; after the cows and horses had had their breakfast, they returned to the kitchen. Plym saw that he was in favor now; his aunt beamed upon him graciously and his uncle was more cheerful than usual.

"N-neow," said Plym with a lump in his throat, "set d-deown er minute an' let m-me tell ye suthin' thet ha-happened last night! I-I'll d-dew et quick's I-I kin an' not stut-stut—Wal, I-I swanny—any more'n I-I kin help!"

Archelaus and Aseneth listened spellbound with staring eyes and bated breath, and Aseneth exclaimed and waved her hands in the thrilling places in the narrative.

"But, Plym," said Aseneth, after Plym had concluded, "I dunno 'beout yer bringin' thet man here, though I 'spose ye hed tew when ther kerriage was caught! I'm erfraid et'll make trouble fer us! We don't want ter git nobody erginst us."

Plym expected this and held in reserve what he "reckoned" would go to the mark quick and "bring them around." He watched them closely as he imparted this additional information. The effect was immediately apparent—it was magical. Archelaus stopped his meditative nursing of his rheumatic knee and drew nearer to Plym; and Aseneth's face was wreathed and ribboned with many broad smiles playing tag over that rosy countenance.

"But ye 'bain't sure o' thet, Plym!" said Aseneth, trying in vain to conceal her satisfaction.

"Yi-yis I-I be! Je-jest cocksure on't! I-I tell ye Aunty, ef ye'll je-jest d-dew yer pur-purtiest—wal, I-I tell ye, suthin's er go-goin' ter ha-happen! M-my Jiminy! Gr-Gret Shagbark! Et's er go-goin' ter be leetle t-ther big-biggest thing ye ever heered on! N-neow," continued Plym, assured that he had won his case, "ye wa-wanter git ther nicest breakfast ye ever d-dreamed on! S-some o' thet new ha-ham an' ther big B-Brahmy eggs, an' je-jest er middlin' slice er tew o' thet poun' ca-cake."

"Yis," said Aseneth, laughing in spite of her determination not to, "ye're talkin' fer yerself neow! Lor' I hain't hardly hed er taste o' thet cake, ye've kept at et so! Ef ye live, ye'll find ye'll hev ter eat suthin' 'sides poun' cake all ther time!"

"An', A-Aunty," exclaimed Plym, passing quickly from this admonition, "soon's Si-Sis' Ann gits u-pup, tackle her, wi-will ye, an' t-tell her she's got ter k-keep mum! But d-don't ye t-tell her wh-what I-I telled ye

las'! Don't ye fergit 'beout thet, A-Aunty! We d-don't wa-want ev'rybody—ther gin-gin'ral p-public—from Thorney Brook, wh-whar ther ansisters ware er wras-wrastlin' fer er livin', wa-way cross ter Bunkum Field er knowin' ev'rythin'—"

"I kin 'tend ter Sis' Ann! Ye needn't give no more orders!"

But Plym had little time to give to pound cake or to Sis' Ann; his mind and body were loaded down with important duties to be discharged to his fellow men now dependent on his attention. He called his guests to breakfast, and, taking his own morning meal in his hand, hurried away to Hokopokonoket Swamp; he carried a basket filled with good things and a can of hot coffee; he did not forget the horses—trust Plym to see that all animals with which he had to do, were well cared for—and provided a peck of oats for each. Taking a circuitous route, to mislead spying eyes, if any were aimed at him, he ran nimbly through Pike Staff Road and thus entered Hokopokonoket Swamp on the other side.

As he hastens through the stubble clogged with snow and ice an idea worth entertaining and giving a snug place in the fireplace of his mind, comes to him. The partridges, now that the weather has cleared and the sun holds up its head, will be looking for breakfast, too, on Papoose Neck, good feeding ground if the snow has not covered, and it has not, for the storm king dropped only a thin layer as he passed. Plym will take his gun for the sake of lingering partridges and for the sake of appearance, and twist his path around by the Carley Mansion to see how the old house appears with no lips to its mouth—without porch—and to learn, if there be opportunity, the state of mind the Carleys are in on this bright, crisp morning. Fortunate occurrence, thought

Plym, the falling of the porch, for Jack and Aleck, always overworked and weary, now had a new wood pile at the front door, and would not be compelled to go into the forest for fuel; an ill wind brings always something good.

Plym looked on with great pleasure and satisfaction as Paige and Wainworth picnicked in the hemlock grove in the calm depths of Hokopokonoket Swamp, and made "mi-highty short work," according to Plym's report, of the juicy ham, the corpulent sausage and the corn cakes golden with Ayrshire butter, not mentioning the pound cake which Plym hoped they would not like; but they did like it and not a crumb as large as a pin head was overlooked; and the horses looked kindly toward Plym and smiled upon him (as horses do always when they carry the ears forward); with half-closed eyes, they munched the fat oats (the horse's pound cake) of Mottle Farm.

At daybreak or soon after, Plym was to go hunting, ostensibly, to visit the carriage and hunt cautiously around the Carley Farm for anything that might be disclosed; the carriage must come away, and it was necessary to know, if possible, what the Carleys were doing. Paige and Bruce (the old peddler is no more as such) on the lower edge of the swamp, were to wait for signals. Wainworth must open school and could not help in the release of the carriage unless it might be taken away before nine o'clock. The man rescued from the Carleys could not be taken away till nightfall, but the carriage could not be left where it was all day.

When Plym returned to the house, he found Bruce and his uncle and aunt with long faces. The rescued man had hardly time to eat his breakfast before the stealthy foe, rheumatism, appeared and laid its hard grip

upon what appeared to be an easy and quickly subjugated victim; there was no denying the fact that although the man was free from the Carleys, yet he was in bonds again that chafed even more than the Carley fetters; he was ill, perhaps seriously ill; chilled and drenched the night before, the enemy laid hold of him and wracked his joints, and Bruce and Archelaus helped him into Plym's bed again.

Aseneth was equal to any emergency and to this one; she did nothing by halves; "the whole or none," might have been her motto. A fire was started in the spare room—a kind of holy of holies in the Mottle Farmhouse, where Archelaus and Plym dare not set foot unless in Sunday dress and then on tip-toe—where the big Bible was kept and the silver spoons with Aseneth's maiden initials on the handles—where the patch-work wonders and heirlooms were stored for the benefit (of moths), perhaps, of Plym or his posterity, if he had any. The bed was aired, warmed (as beds ought to be—with live coals in a brass pan) and coaxed into summer hospitality; and Plym and Bruce, Archelaus bringing up the rear, carried the guest into his new quarters, for the rheumatism had taken such liberties that his legs refused to do their duty, and he sank gratefully into the softest and warmest bed that ever coddled weary man in Ourtown.

Aseneth was versed in the art of medicine—the natural art—the art that was founded on common sense and supported by natural aids. As for rheumatism, 'twas a foe she was glad to meet more than half way with a sternness and stubbornness that no rheumatism could withstand. Archelaus was a victim occasionally, but usually Aseneth kept it at bay. And now having Sis' Ann (now in subjection) to help, Aseneth began the onslaught on

her guest's rheumatism immediately with an army of hot water bottles properly medicated inside and out by the herbs brought from the attic. Aseneth believed as a part of her medical creed, in feeding the inner fire and in keeping it roaring up; and no cook imported in bonds, of unpronounceable name, could concoct more appetizing dishes—simples, every one—to tempt and to lead on than Aseneth; and they were served with such delicacy, so daintily on old china (imported in a wandering ship only a little behind the Mayflower) that it was no wonder that the guest pinched himself to make sure of his identity—to make sure that he was in the flesh, somewhat frail, and not in the topsy turvey of nightmare.

Bruce changed coats with Paige and removed his aged whiskers before leaving the carriage. Sis' Ann, when introduced to him, made an old-time Thorney Brook curtsey, and, later, she declared to Aseneth that that boy Plym after all did make good acquaintances, and that Mr. Bruce, "ef he was most's black's er nigger," was the finest gentleman she had ever met. The guest was now comfortable and in good hands, and, now, the liberation of the carriage was the next duty. Plym conducted Bruce to the rendezvous in Hokopokonoket Swamp and then started on his hunting excursion.

CHAPTER XX.

PLYM AND THE CONSTABLE.

Plym started on his hunting expedition, really, a reconnoissance, eagerly looking for much satisfaction to come from many things to all concerned. As he strode on toward Beetle Crag and Papoose Neck through the frost bejeweled stubble, he patted and tried to coax into greater prominence in his mind, now taxed with enough to give a prime minister the headache, the idea that Plympton Hanker, taking him at his best (in his Sunday suit and his favorite cream-colored necktie) was entitled to respect and support in pushing his claim to a position in the world higher than any heretofore attained.

But the idea was shy, owing to the modesty of its keeper, and, like a bashful child, hid in the closet, refused to come out, and shrunk back when the stare of the world came in through the half open-door; but Plym was securely anchored to one fact in relation to that Plympton Hanker aforesaid, and the thought of it put stiff and springy springs under his heels and sent him on at a swinging gait; and that was that that tyrannical and often tricky and underhanded (nothing open and fair about it anyway) stutter was beginning to find out that it was not wanted, and, that he, the Plympton Hanker, aforesaid, now (not all the time, but often) had the upper hand, and that he could occasionally throttle it and toss it, neck and crop, clear of his mind and thoughts.

This stunted growth on the part of the stutter now beginning to appear in Plym's speech was the result of

the overtopping and shading development of confidence, the offspring of good deeds well done and the appreciation of others openly and warmly expressed.

As soon as Plym reached Bull Pen Pike, he sauntered leisurely, like a crack and cautious sportsman, carrying his gun on his arm, and, looking sharply for the flushing of the game, for spying, perhaps suspicious eyes, might be directed toward him from some place of concealment. After all, his hurried charging up Rattlesnake Hill and around by the Pike Staff Road to the rendezvous in Hokopokonoket Swamp might have been observed. But this thought did not cause Plym much uneasiness; the great point had been gained—the prisoner released—and, although it were better to work under cover a while longer, yet there was little to fear if all exposure came a little ahead of time as planned.

The Carleys must have discovered the carriage, and if they connected it with the flight of their prisoner, naturally they would be interested in further movements to free it. A bend in the pike brought Plym to the entrance of Pignut Lane that led by the carriage and to the Carley Mansion. He was on the point of turning into it when he saw Constable Budd approaching from Snickerville Four Corners. Budd was riding in what he called his "bag buggy"—a one seat, two wheel trap used by jockeys and others who sported in horse flesh and wished to make the fact known. Budd came on at a lively pace or as lively as his very ordinary horse—a foundered gelding—would permit, and Plym came to the conclusion that Budd was, as usual, on the track of "game;" something animated him and made him eager; he was an accommodating official; if he was hard upon the heels of some ill-doer, and he was always, accord-

ing to his own brave words, he was good enough to tell every man he met.

"Hullo, Plym!" he said, drawing rein and coming to a standstill. "Hunting, eh? What luck?"

"N-nothin' yit! Jest c-come eout!"

"Seems to me I see you pretty often with a gun, Plym, but I never saw you have any game! 'Fraid you are not much of a hunter, Plym!"

"P-raps I bean't much et hun-huntin', but I-I dew git suthin' once in er while, an' thet's more'n ye d-dew! I-I never yit heered tell o' yer git-gittin' yer f-fingers on ary one o' them chick-chicken thieves ye're allus on t-ther track o', an' er-er je-jest er goin' ter nab. I-I'm 'way head o' ye fer git-gittin', fer I-I dew git suthin'!"

"Well," said Budd, laughing and pretending to be pleased with this thrust, although he was not, "what's been going on around here? I hear there was strange doings in the Carley woods last night. Heard anything about it?"

"I-I ain't us'ly er roamin' o' nights! I-I like s-sleepin' better. What's ben er goin' on? Wh-what'd ye hear?"

"Jack Carley and Aleck went to town on the early train this morning and stopped to tell me of a carriage up in the woods, broke down and covered with blood, and the ground torn up and trampled 'sthough there'd been a terrible fight and a h—l of a time."

"S-sho! Ye don't say so!" exclaimed Plym, opening his eyes wide and letting his jaw drop as though a twenty-pound weight had suddenly been sprung on it.

"Looks like murder and all that!" exclaimed Budd, closing his mouth like a steel trap, and looking fierce, "and I'm going to get to the bottom of it! Come on if you want to!"

"I-I'm with ye! 'Spose ye're 'fraid t-ter go erlone wh-whar's so much blood's er runnin'! Go's fast's ye wanter! I-I kin keep u-pup with ye an' b-beat thet nag o' yourn ef er b-bundle o' oats was er ha-hangin' er front o' his nose!"

The Carleys, then, had not connected the carriage with the escape of their man, and, doubtless, had gone to town to consult their friend Shad.

When Budd reached the carriage he jumped out of his bag buggy eagerly and a speculative gleam opened wider his sleepy eyes; he walked around the carriage stealthily as though it was a monster asleep and might awake any moment and grab him; he examined the bruised trunks of trees and the borne down underbrush like an Indian of the Fenimore Cooper tribe; on his hands and knees, he inspected footprints in the dead leaves; looked wise and mysterious; shook his head; glared around; took out the cushions of the carriage, and held up to better light, not forgetting to smell them carefully. Meanwhile, Plym was struggling with laughter still keeping out of sight and held down, but threatening every moment to rise in mutiny, break all bonds and rush forth; evidently, two angels of the god of laughter were perched on Plym's shoulder and each tugging stoutly at a cord (a tickling cord) attached to the corners of Plym's mouth.

"Looks bad!" exclaimed Budd, glaring around and hard at Plym, "something's been going on here that's got to be investigated! I don't propose to have such doings in my county without knowing all about it! I give 'em notice I'll be too many for 'em!"

"I-I don't s-see none o' thet b-blood ye spoke er beout er runnin' rou-roun' here!" said Plym, sitting down upon a fallen tree as Budd renewed his investigations,

striding here and there with his hat on the back of his head, and his face lighting up wonderfully when his avaricious eye took in the fine proportions of the carriage.

"Plym," remarked Budd, solemnly if not severely, "if you'd been hunting crooks all your life, as I have, you'd see written here a first-class report of a terrible struggle —crime—murder—something that's got to be looked into!"

"Great Besom! I-I'll tell ye all er beout et! Tew t-teums je-jest come tergether in ther lane an' one had ter turn eout ter let tother go by! T-that's all thar's t'ot fur's I-I kin see!"

Budd sniffed contemptously and had no answer for such stupidity. "I'll take possession of the carriage," said Budd, regarding the carriage with admiration, "and the owners, if they ever call for it, not at all likely, can have it by proving property and giving a proper account of all these dark doings. Fine carriage! Almost new! Cost two hundred dollars if a cent! Fine rig for my pair of mares! No danger the rascals ever claiming it, either! Now, Plym, take a hold here and we'll get it out into the lane in about two shakes of a lamb's tail!"

The freeing of the carriage was easy by daylight; it was necessary only to run it back, and lift up hill the exact distance so that the hub of the off wheel might pass the tree on that side. It was a heavy vehicle, however, having six seats, and the ground behind the rear axle, where the lifters must find foothold, was soft and slippery. Budd tugged, perspired and groaned, and Plym, apparently, exerted all his strength, growing red in the face and blowing after each effort like a sprinter spent. Several times the off wheel was almost in the

right position, when Plym lost his foothold and the carriage settled back into former position.

"No use!" ejaculated Budd, relieving his mind by means of many strong words. "We can't do it! Thought you was a strong man, Plym! You can throw any man in town and walk off with two barrels of flour, I hear, but you can't lift worth a cent when 'twould be of some use! What's the use of having strength, if you have any, if you can't make any use of it?"

"Aw-awful slippery!" returned Plym, apologetically. "Can't gi-git no good footin'! Tell ye wh-what I-I'll dew. I-I got er purty good axe—beout the nicest axe ye mo-most ever s-see, an' et'll d-drap thet tree in er b-beout tew minutes' ch-choppin', an' let t-ther wheel eout. Ye gi-git yer hor-horses an' I'll g-go fer ther axe."

"Horses? I'll hitch the tongue to the gig—"

"Ye ca-can't dew et! Ye've g-got tew short turns ter m-make 'fore ye git ter ther p-pike, an' ye know heow nar-narrer ther lane is. I-it'll make tew long er st-string ter git roun' ther corners."

"Didn't think about that! Guess you are right, Plym! Well, you get your axe and I'll go for the team—"

"Sh!" exclaimed Plym, snatching up his gun and peering through the underbrush. Keep quiet, wi-will ye! I'll give'm b-both bar'ls! My sixty gracious! Er hull fam'ly eout fer breakfast!"

"I don't see anything," said the sheriff, looking hard into the wood.

"Course ye d-don't! Ye said ef I-I was er huntin' cr-crooks all my life (adding in an undertone, an' never git-gittin' any) an' knowed t-ther biz, I-I'd see er hull B-Bull Run battlefield roun' this kerriage. Ef ye was er huntin' game b-birds (ther most on'm tew gamy fer

ye) ye'd see ther purtiest si-sight neow ye most ever pitched yer eyes on—ye'd see that cock patty er strut-struttin' an' er ca-callin' his hens. Sh! He's g-got tew hens an' f-four chicks with 'm! I-I'll give'm ther tew bar'ls!"

"Hold on!" cried Budd. "You'll scare my horse! Wait till I get a little way off!"

Budd drove away and Plym discharged both barrels in quick succession—a signal to Bruce and Paige, that the road to the carriage was open and that all speed that they or their horses could summon was necessary. Plym then ran to the first turn in the lane to make sure that Budd was retreating properly. He saw the twinkle of his yellow wheels around the next bend and then returned to the carriage. Taking off his coat, Plym attacked the carriage like a giant who had a personal grudge against it, and quicker than it can be told, the vehicle was freed and drawn out into the lane, the tongue pointing toward the Carley Mansion. In the carriage Plym found a paper bag in which Paige had brought his midnight lunch; on this with a piece of punk, obtained from a rotting stump, he drew the figure of a hand with prominent forefinger; this he impaled on a sapling and thrust through the ring at the end of the tongue to indicate that Bruce and Paige were to go by the Carley Mansion and not through the village where Budd might be encountered.

Now, Plym ran home for his axe. When he reached the pike, he turned his head resolutely toward Rattlesnake Hill and Snickerville Four Corners that he might not see any movement down Bull Pen Pike toward Hokopokonoket Swamp. He found his axe and waited by the corner of the barn where he could see Budd when he appeared at Snickerville Four Corners, but could not

see as far down Bull Pen Pike as the entrance to Pignut Lane. At last Budd appeared with his pair of bay mares in their best dress—silver mounted harness, for Budd was eager to see his mares and the two hundred dollar carriage together.

Plym reached the entrance to Pignut Lane a little ahead of Budd. He saw the tracks of two horses and he knew that they were going at a good pace when they turned into the lane. If Budd should see the tracks, he might quicken his steps, but he saw nothing.

"Pretty good haul!" ejaculated Budd as he came up and he and Plym turned into the lane. "I don't expect anybody'll ever claim that carriage. They don't dare to! My idea is, Plym, that a man was taken out of that carriage, dragged off into the swamp and done away with. Soon's I get the carriage home, I'll take a look around through Hokypoky Swamp—"

"What b-be ye er goin' ter d-dew with ther kerriage?"

"Going to keep it till called for," replied Budd, laughing at Plym's innocence.

" 'T-'taint fer ye ter k-keep more'n 'tis fer me! What ri-right ye got er keepin' it, fer ye t-talk's though ye was er goin' ter k-keep fer good?"

Budd laughed and slapped the horses with the reins. The time had been short, a close shave all around, and Plym was now trying to think of some way to hold Budd back. Perhaps there was time enough, but he knew that Paige and Bruce were not familiar with horses and their tackle, and they must be given leeway if possible.

"What b-be I er goin' ter git outer this b-business—fer choppin' deown trees fer ye?"

"O, I'll give you a dollar, Plym."

"Dreffle lib-lib-ral, beant ye! Ye're goin' ter git er

k-kerriage wuth t-tew hundurd d-dollars, an' 'spect t-ter keep et, an' ye'll give me ther rou-rousin' sum o' one d-dollar! I-I won't cut d-deown no tree fer no d-dollar!" and Plym struck his axe into a tree and sat down on a stump to arbitrate.

"I can cut down the tree myself!"

"Not wi-with my axe ye don't cut d-deown no tree!"

"Well, I'll do what's fair, Plym."

"What b-be ye of'rin'?" asked Plym, cutting off a twig and beginning to whittle a toothpick.

"What'll you take?"

" 'Spose t-twont take long t-ter cut ther tree d-deown, but I-I hev ter be pur-purty keerful er choppin' 'tween ther spokes o' ther wheel. What ye of'rin' fer ther job?"

"What'll you take?"

"Say f-five dollars an' I-I'm yer sixpunce! Speak qu-ick! I-I aint er hankerin' arter ther j-job."

"That's too much, Plym, too much; but as I'm in a hurry and want to get time enough to hustle around in Hokopoky Swamp, I'll say yes, but it's steep—too d—d steep!"

"When b-be I-I er goin' ter git t-ther m-money?"

"Well, the first time I see you! I haven't a red with me."

"O!" said Plym, sitting down again and renewing his whittling, "I-I kinder guess I-I don't wanter cut d-deown thet t-tree! I-I'll git er long home!"

"Sure's I'm a sinner born to trouble, I'll give you the fiver, Plym, soon's I get the carriage home! You can ride right over with me and get your money!"

"I-I'm with ye, then!"

"Tell you what, Plym," said Budd as they proceeded up the lane, "you can't find no such carriage's that around Ourtown! Somebody'll come and claim it? Not

much! I'll keep it a reasonable length of time and then sell to the highest bidder. See?" And Budd winked hard at Plym and said, "I'll see that the right bidder gets it. I've been looking for just such a carriage for my mares! I wouldn't be surprised if it cost two fifty—every dollar of it."

When they came to the place where the carriage was left, and found no carriage, Plym and Budd stared at each other in blank amazement; Budd was speechless a moment, dazed and as good as scuttled; then he burst forth in fury and impotent wrath; and Plym, as soon as the first flush of feigned astonishment, would let him think, laid down flat on his stomach on the leaves, his heels in the air, and laughed till the tears ran in two big streams. This was equivalent to sticking pins into Budd. If oaths and curses could perch on trees like birds (and it is said that curses do sometimes come home to roost), the branches roundabout would bend to the point of breaking like an overladen fruit tree. Budd was rampant, kicked the dead leaves and a stout oak tree that held the carriage as though it had committed an offence in letting the carriage go, and glared at Plym fiercely.

"I b'lieve you know something about it! There want time to do it! You saw somebody, I know you did! I'll make you pay for it, too!"

"Yis, t-thar was time—d-dead loads o' time fer anybody thet's g-got er leetle li-life! I haint seen er si-single soul sence ye we-went off! Ye're je-jest beat clean eout o' yer boots, thet's all, an'-an' ye wanter blame et onter m-me! P'raps I-I took ther kerriage erway un-under my a-arm an' hid et s-somewhars! Ye mought s-sarch me t-ter s-see ef I-I got et in my poc-pocket! An' d-d'ye see, they didn't cut d-deown no tree, nu-nuther! Mi-highty slick an' qu-ick I-I call ther job! What be I-I

er goin' ter gi-git out er ther biz—fer wa-waitin' on ye all this time?"

Without a word, Constable Budd turned his horses around and departed, and Plym followed at a respectful distance. When Budd reached the pike, he waited for Plym to come up.

"Plym, come over to the village and I'll give you that five if you'll agree to keep dark—not say a word."

"I-I don't want n-no five, leastways not from ye! An' I-I won't give ye erway!"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE THREE PLOTTERS.

Rumor is quick of foot in any channel and thrice nimble when it returns to old ruts. The wagging tongues of Gotham—the lesser Gotham wherein dwelt the Hon. Theodore Lullywick, had unlimbered aforetime to make free with the name and the fame of Lullywick; and now they were twisting and turning again with quiet gossip and "they say" rehearsal—as yet timid, in fear or shame, but gathering strength at every exchange and repetition; nothing definite showed its head long enough to be pinned to the wall and interviewed; but on 'Change, here and there, the word was whispered to the effect that Lullywick was in sore distress and near his financial end.

Wise men who had been pinched in one or the other of Lullywick's former questionable failures, tightened their purse strings and doubled their credit pickets. Lullywick himself was the best advertisement of his state of mind and pocket; still calm and dignified and self possessed, but haggard, worn with the unmistakable air of a man harrassed and driven into converging ways, growing narrower at every step.

On the day after the escape of the Carley prisoner, Lullywick sat in his private office examining papers before him and often staring at the blank wall opposite. In his set face was a hard, vindictive, yet determined expression; showing, possibly, that his mind was busy with disagreeable yet necessary problems.

The clerk announced the arrival of Mr. Jeremy Shadler and Mr. Jack Carley. Lullywick's face grew dark as these worthies, following the clerk, without waiting for summons, entered the room. The greeting was formal, if not stiff, particularly on the part of the Hon. Theodore Lullywick, and had no warmth or cordiality in it. Jack Carley sat directly opposite Lullywick and favored him with that sullen, dogged look that might cause a timid man to retire into his shoes and hold his breath. There is nothing in this struggling world that will send things home quicker than brass—that great commodity now personified throughout this republic; and Mr. Jack Carley was an accomplished worker in brass, carrying his stock in trade in his face and more particularly, on the tip of his tongue.

Jack Carley came down to a business basis immediately, and spread out his wares, verily like a peddler, for the inspection of the haughty gentleman sitting before him.

"Mr. Lullywick, we've served you and your gracious madame several years to the best of our ability and have kept the faith to the letter and held fast in all sincerity. We should like to continue in the pursuit of happiness and—and wealth for time indefinite, but, sir, circumstances, doing business on their own account and getting beyond our control, make further service, along the same line, impossible; in other words, my dear sir, the place is getting too d—d hot for us; from what cause we know not, but the finger of suspicion, black as h—l, is pointing our way in a very audacious manner. There is no traitor in the camp—no skulking squealer, but somebody or something is taking note of our comings and our goings and putting a very strong finger into our pie in more ways than one—having the intolerant im-

pudence, sir, to perch in tree tops and to come down and hammer us with the devil's knuckles and make life disagreeable for us; and we know not when we may be called upon to stand and deliver; more briefly, sir, the jig is up; prying eyes have put on suspicious glasses and the time has come to cut stick and make tracks.

"That is the short summary, but it gives the facts and sends the warning home, to us at least. Now, sir, we are ready to close the account—to strike the balance (or anything else) this very night. Thus are we driven into a corner—but there is a loop hole left open for all of us. There's not an hour to lose; at all events, such is our appreciation of things that may conspire to our overthrow and yours, that unless we come right speedily to some understanding, we shall shake the dust of Ourtown from our boot heels within twenty-four hours, and leave him to wander like the wind where he listeth—within twenty-four hours, I say, and my friend and companion, Mr. Jeremy Shadler, will underscore what I say; we throw wide the doors and allow him to skip—unless—unless we can come to terms; quick, now—within the hour. The account must be closed tonight and there is a way to do it quick and sure. Are you ready?"

"What do you mean?" asked Lullywick, hardly above a whisper, for he saw the glitter of Jack's eyes—the dark gleam that came through his half closed eyelids. When some men, hot in the devil's employ, lower the voice, they also may half close the eyes—the one to compliment the other. Jack leaned over the table and whispered softly, but loud enough for Shadler to hear. Lullywick shrunk back with a start, grew a shade paler and the perspiration began to stand out like beads on his forehead. Silence followed; still as death the three plotters sat and looked not at each other (they did not

dare, bold as they were, to face each other), but blankly at their boots. Perhaps Lullywick was not prepared for what had been proposed; possibly his soul, heart, head or whatever was in this business, was not yet up to the standard required for work as dark as this.

The oppressive silence was broken by Jack, who handed Lullywick a paper on which was written figures with a dollar mark to brace them up, "Three times that, or that for each!" Lullywick started again, aye, he sprang nimbly out of his chair and stood leaning against a bookcase, his hands deep in his pockets and his eyes cast down. At last Lullywick, drawing his hand wearily across his forehead, like one dazed and bewildered, said huskily, "I must consult—"

"Certainly, sir, certainly! Consult the madame quick—quick is the word—and report like a man on the third base and starting for the home goal!" interrupted Jack, growing bolder, if that were possible, as he saw, as he thought, successful issue coming his way.

"Meet me here at two o'clock," said Lullywick, and Jack and Shadler withdrew. Lullywick resumed his chair, after locking the door, and began to ransack his safe, taking out some papers and returning others to their places. From the cash drawer of the safe, Lullywick took out a blank check signed by Mrs. Lullywick. Lullywick smiled grimly as he looked at it. Lullywick was a sharper from Sharpville or a shark from Sharkville. When he married the widow Tukins (no wonder she wanted to change her name, mused Lullywick) he thought incidentally of the fine large property that needed his administration to build itself up into more magnificent proportions; but having ordinary sense, if not a little more, and some power of observation, discovered in the honeymoon—before it lost its honey or the moon

went into an eclipse—that he had not married an angel, at least not a full fledged one—the wings might come later, but as yet there was no sign of them.

Therefore, it was apparent to the cautious and prudent Lullywick that if hay was to be made and the barns stuffed full, it must be done when the sun was in the zenith and sent down beneficent rays or, more exactly, when the honeymoon was at the full. Accordingly, before this moon set (often behind stormy clouds, black as night, before it went down) Lullywick secured from Mrs. Lullywick a signed check, ostensibly to cancel a small debt of her own. In a moment of confidence and admiration, Mrs. Lullywick merely signed her name, leaving her husband to supply date and amount. Lullywick sent his own check to pay what the check of Mrs. Lullywick was intended to pay, and carefully preserved the signed check against the time of need. That was the check now in Lullywick's hands. The time to realize had come, and he would see that the check did its duty in the scheme now very interesting to several persons, especially the Hon. Theodore Lullywick.

Till midday, Lullywick examined papers, tearing up many and placing others in a snug gripsack. He filled out check after check and wrote slowly and carefully, and the names written on the lower line of the checks was not that of Lullywick. His credit was good yet in some quarters, at least at his own bank, and he made quick use of it. This bundle of checks he turned over to his clerk to take to the bank to deposit. If the clerk had any roaming idea on the subject, he must have thought that the morning mail had been unusually liberal to the Hon. Theodore Lullywick in sending him so many three and four figure checks.

At half past twelve, Lullywick rode home to lunch, an

unusual performance, but he had important business with Madame Lullywick, and, moreover, he was going to New York by the early evening train and must have change of linen. The scene at the Lullywick Mansion, consequent upon Madame Lullywick's learning of Jack Carley's plans and demands, cannot be reproduced by word pictures. To say that it was stormy, wild and dangerous, accompanied by thunder, lightning and rain—aye, rain, pouring rain of words, and hail, too, with jagged edges, is only a zephyr description of a hurricane.

The stately Lullywick, however, had seen so much of this kind of weather, and still alive with some experience worth having in a time of danger, clung to the lee side of something and waited for the blast to spend its force. He let the storm rage and wear itself out, knowing that in the end Madame Lullywick would yield as she must, as there was no alternative; indeed, Lullywick knew that Madame Lullywick, storm as she might, and would under slight provocation, or none at all, would part with her last penny before Jack Carley would be allowed to depart unsatisfied; and, moreover, Jack Carley was well acquainted with the same fact. And now, the crafty Lullywick thrust in a hand for his own benefit.

He represented to the furious woman that the contract between him and Jack Carley stipulated that the money supposed to be forthcoming speedily, must pass through his, Lullywick's fingers; and there was reason in this method; all payments to date for service rendered had been made by Lullywick, for Madame Lullywick saw the possible danger of direct contact with a business that had a very dark side to it; but the payments thus far had been small comparatively, and to Lullywick had not come the time and opportunity (and tide of affairs) until now. Since the honeymoon six years ago,

the Lullywick household had been disturbed by many a storm as already indicated, brought on and led to bursting by Lullywick's attempt, more or less diplomatic, to make himself master, custodian—anything—in which capacity he might manage his wife's property and do his duty by it as became a man of his ability.

Therefore, when Lullywick, after the first hurricane had swept the deck and had quieted down so that his voice could be heard, suggested that the payment to Jack Carley should be made through him—that the check should be made to his order—Madame Lullywick hesitated, shut up her check book with a snap and declared that she would pay Jack Carley herself. Lullywick knew, however, that he would win and he did; as he prepared to leave the house without another word, apparently, Madame Lullywick thrust the check into his hands, and now, nothing was in the way marked out for the future operations of the wily Lullywick. He did not tell Madame Lullywick that he was going to New York; no, he would send word by the office boy, if he thought of it and it should be convenient; "or," soliloquized Lullywick, "I'll send one of her own precious sons with the news if he's sober!"

During the stormy interview at the Lullywick Mansion, the sly Lullywick had quietly led the termagant from one thing to another, or by certain interjected remarks and queries had prompted her to reveal the amount she had on deposit in the bank—the amount of spot cash that was immediately available; this amount, Lullywick at the bank, filled into the blank check, and drew her entire deposit; at his own bank he overdrew his account notwithstanding the unusual amount deposited in the morning. It was now nearly two o'clock, the time appointed to meet Jack Carley, but he was not ready

to see him yet; as Mr. Jack Carley's business was that of waiting, let him wait.

At the house, such a gale had riven things that all thought of lunch had fled from Lullywick's mind; but now, he might as well dine and fortify for the wearisome journey to New York. With the gripsack beside him in which were many thousand dollars, the result of the morning's check making and the pillaging of his wife's account, Lullywick dined sumptuously, spending so much time at table that the banks had closed when he called for his coffee. He knew that Jack Carley would wait; and if he did not, of what concern was it to him?

But Jack was waiting in company with Mr. Jeremy Shadler, and neither, especially Jack, appeared to be in a comfortable frame of mind. Lullywick had many fine words worked into apologetic phrases—well sounding excuses for keeping his friends waiting so long, but the great press of business had tripped him up and held him prisoner. Lullywick's manner had put on a new dress since the morning interview; his old time urbanity was on parade again and he was again smiling and courtly Lullywick. He informed Jack and the eager, listening Shadler, that Madame Lullywick approved and assented and, moreover, complimented Mr. Jack Carley upon his vigilance in all service heretofore rendered, and his diplomacy and abilities generally.

Jack Carley received all this fine talk with several large pinches of salt; his manner showed that all this "slop," as he called Lullywick's fine speeches, puzzled him; a few hours before, Lullywick would not have been in a tighter jacket, evidently, if he had been on the way to the gallows; but now, right from the bandbox, every hair laid one way, every word had a smile attached to it like a tail to a kite, and every gesture was as graceful

as that of a supple elm yielding to the breeze. All this had its effect upon Jack Carley and upon that silent gentleman of the name of Shadler—not usually so docile and obsequious, but he was in the presence of his employer and it was policy to rein in his tongue. But to business. Lullywick proposed to write a check to cover the amount of Jack Carley's demand.

"Check be d—d!" growled Jack. "Cash on the nail, every cent of it!"

"My dear sir!" exclaimed the smiling Lullywick, "do you suppose I carry such a sum with me?"

"If you can make a check, you can càsh it! The sum in honest cash, told down and no paper!"

Lullywick looked at his watch and appeared to be surprised that the hour was so late, and again expressed his regret that he must thus inconvenience his friends, which Jack received with a sneer and side glances at Shadler.

"Banks are closed now, Mr. Carley. Very sorry! Come in the morning and you shall have the cash. There's no other way! Tomorrow morning at ten o'clock sharp!"

"Make out the check, then," said Jack, "we might as well have it in case of accident, eh, Shad?" Shadler nodded cautiously. Lullywick took a receipt and Jack and Shadler departed. Now, Lullywick locked his office door and packed and rearranged the contents of the two gripsacks, and at five o'clock he was driven to the railway station, purchased a ticket for New York, secured a section in the parlor car and sank into the soft cushion with a sigh of relief.

CHAPTER XXII.

MR. JACK CARLEY CALLS ON MADAME LULLYWICK.

The next morning after the departure of the Hon. Theodore Lullywick for New York, at the time appointed, ten o'clock, Mr. Jack Carley and Mr. Jeremy Shadler appeared at the Lullywick office and called for the head and front of the establishment. A great change had come over Jack Carley and his friend Jeremy Shadler. The day before when the prospect was not bright, even when Lullywick announced the ready acquiescence of Madame Lullywick, for they had doubts of the sincerity of Lullywick. But now as the two sly ones called boldly, if not insolently for Lullywick, all cares had been brushed aside if manners, according to common dictum, speak louder than words.

The cup had passed between them but not often enough, thus early in the day, to rob of reason and legs, but sufficient to give Jack's tongue an impudent and audacious turn. When the clerk informed them that Lullywick was in New York on urgent business, and would not return till the next morning, Jack and his friend Shadler appeared to be astonished and indignant. Several men who evidently had business of importance with the office, came in as Jack was relieving his mind in a voice loud in tone and broad in emphasis.

"I submit to you, my worthy friend, Mr. Jeremy Shadler," said Jack, his hat on the back of his head, a cigar in his mouth and his hands in his trouser pockets, "if it was polite and proper for the Hon., the very Hon. Theo-

dore Lullywick to make an appointment for ten o'clock sharp on this fine and bracing morning, when he knew—must have known—that he did not intend to keep it? Is it possible, Mr. Jeremy Shadler, that the Hon. Theodore, the lamb-like and the bland, could so far forget his moral and financial obligations as to slide out, vamoose, for the time being at least, in this shameful way? And where is the cash he spoke of, to cure sore eyes, to be laid down this morning at the hour of ten sharp? As you are his confidential agent, Mr. Jeremy Shadler, I pause for reply!"

The two rascals then engaged in a little by play—winked at each other, laughed and held their sides, and in the excess of merriment exclaimed in chorus, "Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" The visitors who called to inquire for Lullywick looked on suspiciously, keenly as the two ruffians gabbled on, interested, evidently, in the reference to the payment of money. Jack and Shadler slouched out of the office, laughing, chuckling and nudging each other.

Enquiry for Lullywick increased during the day, and became impatient and sharp before the office closed at night. The next morning when Lullywick was due, according to the word of the clerk, stern, watchful men waited in the outer office; the clerk was in despair and showed it; the Lullywick boys, having no real connection with the business, and having also no knowledge of it, stared stupidly at applicants who "wanted to know," and who were determined, evidently, to find out. Thus through the day, the tide of seekers for knowledge in reference to the Hon. Theodore Lullywick flowed in and out like that of the sea—coming in with a rush and slowly ebbing. The next day the bubble burst; notes went to protest; checks had come home and were found

to be forgeries and Lullywick had fled and no one knew whither.

On this eventful morning about nine o'clock, Mr. Jack Carley called at the Lullywick Mansion in Bond street and walked boldly up the broad granite steps and, placing his thumb on the electric button, kept it there till the door opened; and when it did open about four inches, Jack put his foot against it and threw it wide, to the dismay of the portly negro who acted as doorkeeper, who shrunk back and timidly asked for the visitor's card.

"Card be d—d! Tell Mrs. Ca—I mean Madame Lullywick, that a gentleman of the first cut and swab waits below and will consider himself insulted if he waits long! Stir yourself like a live nigger!"

The negro hesitated and looked at Jack doubtfully for he was not accustomed to such freedom of speech on the part of visitors of the class to which Jack belonged evidently, for Jack's dress was careless and his breath as strong as his speech. Without more ado, Jack seized the porter by the neck, backed him up against the wall in a corner and placed his knee against the man's protruding stomach.

"You d—d nigger! I'll tie a double bow knot in your neck if you don't move quick and stop your gaping! Now!" and he released him and sent his foot to aid his departure as he turned and fled. The porter returned and appeared at the end of the hall, keeping his hand on the door knob ready to retire if necessary.

"Madame Lullywick told me to say, sah, she don't know nothing 'bout Mr. Lullywick's business, and she don't receive visitors this time in de morning, sah!"

"By —— !" and Jack ran forward, but the porter disappeared through the convenient doorway and thoughtfully turned the key. Undaunted, Jack returned to the

front door, placed his thumb on the electric button and held it there. A black head came out of a side door and disappeared, and then from the drawing room swept the queenly figure of Madame Lullywick, her face aflame, her eyes flashing and prepared to spring like a tigress on her prey; but when she saw her visitor, quick as lightning, as though a magician's wand had been passed over her, her face changed or attempted to, and she exchanged a look of rage and fury for one of serenity and calm benignity, as far as possible, under the circumstances, and she came forward with outstretched hand.

"Good morning, Mr. Carley! Delighted to see you! We've just left the breakfast table! Will you not have something?"

"Thank you! Don't know but I will take a bite! But a little business first, ma'am! You might tell your niggers to get something ready—something good and hearty. By the way, I've not had the great pleasure of seeing you since I attended your reception. You see, ma'am, I happened to be in town that day, and although you didn't see fit to send me an invitation, which touched me sore, I thought nevertheless, that you'd be glad and full of joy to see me, and so I came along with my dear friend, Mr. Jeremy Shadler, to see what kind of a bum you were going to have. But my friend Shadler got very thirsty on the way over here, and later became so weary that I left him tucked up snugly on a bench in the park to take a nap while I came on to pay my respects to you.

"Well, I never felt so much at home at any party in my life! Just my kind of folks, every d—d one of them. 'Twas a dandy breakdown, wasn't it? And the supper—well, that was out of sight! And that reminds me. I don't know when I've tasted such smooth liquor as you

poured out for the nobs that night! I tell you it was slick! If you'll order up a bottle of the same stuff to go with that breakfast your niggers may be preparing, I'll imagine I'm at the party again. Now, then, speak to your niggers about the breakfast, and then to business!"

Madame Lullywick led the way to her sitting room, or boudoir, as she called it, and motioned Jack to a seat and went to the kitchen to order breakfast. When she returned, Jack opened his case promptly.

"You've done fair by us, ma'am, and we've come up to the scratch every time in our contract with you. But now there's a hitch in the proceedings or in their carrying out, and I've come to get you to straighten them out, and grease the wheels again that things may run smoothly. The very Hon. Theodore Lullywick agreed to pay us a certain sum of money for doing a bit of ticklish business for his benefit and yours, and up to this moment, ma'am, not a picayune has come to hand."

Madame Lullywick began to see, perhaps, that Lullywick's departure was something to her; she had announced to many eager enquirers at the house that she knew nothing of Mr. Lullywick's affairs and, further, had no interest in them; she was changing her mind now; so visibly was she affected by this announcement of Jack's that she could hardly control herself. At last she asked in a whisper:

"Where is—he?"

"What! The old man?"

"Yes."

"Six feet under ground, ma'am, and no danger of his getting out. But we'll dig him up and set him on your front steps with the proper placard pinned to him, and blab the whole business if the pay for the job is not forthcoming now—now, ma'am."

"I gave Mr. Lullywick my check for the amount and supposed—"

"I don't know or care what you did, or what you supposed! The Very Hon. Theodore Lullywick gave me a check, but it's no good; there's not a dollar to meet it at the bank, ma'am! No use to waste time talking about that check—"

"There's some mistake! Mr. Lullywick has been detained on business and will soon return," she faltered, wringing her hands and looking at Jack so fiercely that he gave his chair a backward hitch, for those long finger nails had been whittled and filed to sharp, needle points, according to the fashion of the day, and might fly out and scratch, involuntarily, so wrought up apparently was this fierce woman.

"Whatever I am, ma'am, I'm not a fool! I did not come here to listen to any such talk as that! Such chaff is thrown away! Don't offer me any more of it! No mistake, ma'am! The Hon. Theodore Lullywick will not return—soon! You know that he's a d—d scoundrel and is off for good!"

"Sir!" she exclaimed, springing up and glaring at Jack. "Do you dare to thus insult me in my own house?"

"In your own house! Ha! ha! That's a clever conceit, and you do it handsome, I'll be bound! In-your-own-house! That does sound fine! Indeed! Now," continued Jack, rising and approaching nearer and returning her fierce look with interest, "no more of this flummery, woman! Don't 'sir' me or talk of insult when you hear what you know is the truth! I want the sum of money agreed upon, and I intend to have it. If I do not get it and get it quick, I'll blow you to h—l within an hour! Take your choice and take it now, and take it without another word! You've found your match at

last, my fine woman. Mr. Jack Carley has you right under his broad thumb and there you'll stay till the money is produced! Put by your fierce looks for your servants and don't train them on me! Now, what have you to say?"

"I'll give you a check—"

"No check! The check business don't work! Cash, ma'am!"

"But I have not so much—"

"As I told the Hon. Theodore, if you can make a check, you can cash it! Get the money, and while you are getting it, I'll take that breakfast you offered so politely."

She conducted Jack to the dining room and then hurried away to the bank with the check and learned that her deposit had been withdrawn. Angry, imperious and blinded by passion, she called for proof and was accommodated, and saw now that the departure of her husband had some significance to her. She staggered, or felt her way out of the bank, for the hot tears of vexation and wrath were boiling up and bubbling over.

In the meantime, in the great arm chair in which Lullywick had sat at table, his feet on a soft cushioned stool on wheels, Jack Carley laid about him and made free with what was within reach as any valiant trencher man can do as often as opportunity offers. Madame Lullywick had prepared the servants for the visitor; they were directed to yield to him every attention—to all his whims and humors and to bow down to him in humility and servility. Jack feasted as he did not often—perhaps never before had so many good things been thrust upon him. The servants—five of them—ran hither and thither in response to his many commands and made merry behind his back.

After the last course, Jack drew out his pipe and was lighting it when the door opened and in walked the two Lullywick boys—just released from their beds. They had degenerated into the ways of men who court darkness and shun the light—who work (if that be the name for it) by candle light and sleep by day. Jack was in good humor as he or any man ought to be after feasting so well; but the Lullywicks, from disposition and a night of revelry, were not in a cheerful mood. The story may be told briefly. The Lullywick boys did not stop to consider (born without sense and not finding any since) that the stranger whom they found in the dining room was there by somebody's invitation, and unable to elicit from Jack any explanation, were reckless enough to fall upon him in great fury (for them) and attempt to eject him. The engagement came to a quick, decisive conclusion. Jack gave his hard, black fist full freedom and laid the Lullywicks under the table, and retired to the drawing room to finish his pipe.

When Madame Lullywick returned, she found Jack taking his ease, his hat on his head and his feet in a satin-covered chair. He pulled at his black pipe calmly and appeared at peace with all mankind.

"I cannot pay you to-day," said Madame Lullywick resolutely, but not defiantly. "I have houses and lands; all is in my name and all belongs to me. Give me time to dispose of it and you shall be paid! I'll give you my note and take it up as soon as I can sell some property."

"Very well, ma'am!" said Jack, who knew, perhaps, that she told the truth about her inability to make immediate payment in cash, and when he had placed the note carefully in his purse, he called for security.

"Security?"

"To be sure! Something that may be turned into money in case you do not come to time on the note—in case of your death, loss of property and so forth."

"But what?"

"Why, my dear madame, gold, silver, jewels! When I had the honor of attending your reception, you wore jewels enough to more than half pay the bill and your lovely daughters were loaded down likewise. Bring them out, the jewels, I mean, not your daughters, enough to cancel the obligation, and I'll keep watch and ward over them till you pay up in cash. No time to lose, ma'am!"

Madame Lullywick produced a miscellaneous assortment of rings, bracelets, necklaces, brooches glittering with brilliants; and still Jack declared that the amount was short—a long way from the goal. Again she foraged up and down the house and laid another collection at Jack's feet and he was not satisfied.

"I suppose, ma'am, you have much good plate. I assure you we are tired of taking our corned beef and sole leather steak from plebian porcelain and pewter. As for spoons, I don't believe there's a dozen silver ones in the house. I'm sure, ma'am, our bean porridge would have a much better flavor, if we could take it with the kind of spoon I used at your reception when I had the pleasure of eating nine floating islands and all the rich, cream-like verdure growing on them and drank the sea of crimson julap all around them. A few spoons, ma'am, assorted sizes for company, but not the kind that bears your coat of arms on the handle. See what you can find, ma'am, to complete the list. By the way, ma'am, allow me to thank you for the rich repast you were good enough to spread out for me. Your sons favored me with a call and we had a very delightful picnic together. When they come around, please give them my compli-

ments and tell them to come and dine with me whenever it should occur to them that they want more. And will you have the kindness to tell them that there is nothing better to cover a bruise than court plaster if it match the complexion, and that to reduce a black swelling under the eye, a hungry leech is the best."

This was Greek to Madame Lullywick, but it might be plain English when she looked into the welfare of her sons again. "You are doing bravely!" said Jack as Madame Lullywick returned with several trays of spoons. "Now let one of your niggers bring in a trunk—a big one!" A giant Saratoga was rolled into the adjoining room and Jack seized it and drew it into the drawing room. To pack all the trinkets and silverware as Jack disposed of them, was easy. In the drawing room were many cushions and chair tidies; of these, Jack took enough to fill the trunk to keep the contents from contact with each other.

"Now, ma'am, will you have the kindness to order up your carriage and a man to go with me to the station to carry one side of this little Saratoga gripsack; if you have a decent smelling white man on the premises, send him, but no nigger. When I get a holiday, ma'am, I shall call to see most particular that nig that let me in—the nig with a stomach—and take some liberties with him if I can get my hands on him."

A man—a white man—appeared, took one side of the trunk and Jack the other; the carriage was at the door; they were half way down the front steps when a carriage drew up to the curbstone and four men jumped out. They came quickly up the steps and stopped in front of the descending trunk.

"What's this?" asked one of the men, turning to Jack.

Well, sir, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it's a trunk! Don't block the way! Stand aside, if you please!"

But they did not stand aside; they seized the trunk literally and carried it back to the hall of the house, and Jack Carley, still preserving his bravado, quietly stepped into the carriage and ordered the driver to proceed. He would have his ride—ride in style for once—if he did lose the trunk.

The officers, for such they were, attached the house and placed a keeper on guard; but all came to naught; Madame Lullywick produced proof that she was the sole owner. The furniture of the office was all the creditors found at this time to satisfy their claims. Thus ended the commercial house of Lullywick.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE BLUE DRESS AND THE BLUE TRIMMED HAT.

Success invites confidence and entertains it, leads up surely step by step to greater daring and possibly to loftier heights of achievement. The criminal born to infamy with an itching palm that yields to no treatment except that which comes from contact with what belongs to another, cowers and trembles after the first act of disobedience with natural self—the filching of an apple from the stand of the blind huckster. But, undetected, he passes quickly and easily to greater crimes and fears or feels nothing.

The study of heredity entertains the mind like the unfolding of a plot in natural or unnatural fiction like "pigs in clover," like the "fifteen puzzle," but the result is of no practical value except that of momentary diversion. What is the remedy when the fourth generation may score its infamy on the last?

Every man stands between two ladders—on the last rung of the ladder above him and on the first rung of the ladder below him. He looks askance at the stained characters of some of his ancestors who occupied the rungs of the ladder above him, but regrets are vain; it is useless to waste powder and shot on the bird that has flown; the mill wheel will not be turned by the water that passed yesterday; but he will see to it and be sharp about it, even severe with himself, that the descendants creeping down the ladder below him, shall be up to the mark—his standard, at least, for he has stuffed his mind

with facts, facts, facts in relation to heredity till his mouth opens to give relief and to tell all about it; and, then, he falls in love like any other sane man—falls in deep and gets out—still like a sane man, too.

But before marriage—perhaps before the word, the promise to marry, has been exchanged—comes the fact that the woman is the daughter of a felon. And he knows all about heredity; he has studied deep and pondered well; he has made almost a solemn compact with himself and his descendants that they shall not have occasion to look askance at him, at least, whatever others may do, and accuse him of thrusting ill fame into the race.

What is the result? He marries the woman. Who will dare to suggest to him that he may be the father of criminals? What, this pure and beautiful woman, the mother of felons! If her father was a felon, it was not her fault! Is she to be treated like a felon because her father was a felon? And every man and every woman cries no and applauds him for the total disregard and eclipse of the teachings of heredity; and the man begins to people the rungs of the ladder below him; and sometime somebody will know whether felons crop out or not.

Madame Lullywick's father was one of Nature's monuments—a man of the highest character, impulse and attainment. She inherited her mother's features and temperament, but there the inheritance ended; the dark, vindictive spirit that ruled her must come from some unbalanced ancestor in a generation forgotten or from one of which nothing was known. Thus knarled and distorted by her own passion, sense of honor and decency was blunted or lacking. The failure and crime of her husband had no effect upon that haughty, ill directed

spirit; she dismissed him it may be supposed with a toss of the head, and may have taken courage at the easy riddance.

On the afternoon of the day when the city rang with the report of the ill doing of Lullywick, Madame Lullywick and her daughters, in their gilded coach and driver in livery, rode defiantly through the streets. No shame in that haughty countenance—only bold and staring insolence. And this is the daughter of the man and of the woman who ruled in the hearts of men by the mere possession of Christian graces that appeal to all and hold all in willing bondage.

On the day after Mr. Jack Carley made his visit to the Lullywick mansion, Madame Lullywick summoned Agnes Canton to her private "boudoir." In her encounters with Madame Lullywick, during the last three or four months, Agnes' quick eye had detected what she called a new spirit—some new impulse that animated and led on. And now she saw that something unusual dominated the woman whom she must still call her benefactor.

Madame Lullywick was standing when Agnes entered, a hand resting on the back of a chair, body erect and head thrown back to a poise that gave her a proud and insufferable, haughty bearing; an empress might stand before her meanest slave with less dignity and conscious power; but in this rigid (and frigid) figure, in the flushed cheek, in the cold glitter of her eyes, defiance was the prominent feature. Madame Lullywick's speech was always scant, emphatic and pointed. She looked upon Agnes a moment in silence—a silence if long continued would have driven Agnes from the room, for she felt instinctively that the limit of all things in that house to her had been reached; she saw this in the hostile, venomous

look that now rested upon her. At length, with a toss of the head, Madame Lullywick loosened her tongue.

"Agnes, I have fed and clothed you, and given you an education. It is only just that you make any return you can. Hereafter, I expect you to help in the kitchen and laundry and wait on the table," and Madame Lullywick swept out of the room like a queen retiring from audience. That was the usual way; she feared reply and discussion and always avoided it if possible, by getting beyond reach—the device of the cowardly.

Agnes sat motionless staring at the door through which Madame Lullywick had made her hasty exit. She was not surprised, or at least, not discomfited by what Madame Lullywick told her; but she wondered what had inspired it or the manner of communicating it. Mechanically, Agnes returned to her room to study this new feature presented to her; to her the house was full of mysteries or gave rise to indefinable thoughts and suspicions.

Agnes' room was in the upper story on the same floor with the servants' rooms; it contained a crippled rocker, a battered bureau, and a narrow bed; no covering was on the floor except a bit of worn carpet in front of the bed. It was as bare as a room could be and minister to the occupant; and yet, as Agnes entered it now, it had a cheerful look with the sun coming in by the only window and throwing its rays across the little row of books on the top of the bureau; never had she given a thought to the fact that the furnishing of the room was strangely at variance with that in other parts of the house; the rooms of the Misses Lullywick were full of luxuries—soft carpets on the floors and costly engravings on the walls. But with all its plainness and severe simplicity, the room had much attraction for Agnes, for it had been

her home, her study for six years, but now the time had come to leave it.

In the crippled rocker, her winter cloak around her, for no heat came into the room, she tried to find some clue to the motive that led Madame Lullywick in this last triumph over her, for thus it appeared. If she had told her kindly that she wished her to help in the work of the household, less would she think of it. In the tone and manner if not in the words was the imputation that she had made no return for the benefits received. That was unjust; up to this time, Agnes had not been asked to render any service; but again and again, until weary of asking, she had offered to do whatever might be needed, for in the intervals of study, the mind rests if turned into new channels; but Madame Lullywick had no interest then in a return of benefits, and Agnes sought the housekeeper and had the satisfaction of rendering some service and of acquiring knowledge of domestic things that might be useful sometime.

And now from a position of apparent equality to be relegated to that of a servant, was incomprehensible. Since Madame Lullywick burst out with that horrible sneer and slur about her birth, Agnes had become accustomed to the thought that for some reason Madame Lullywick opposed her going among strangers; but that was an error; Madame Lullywick knew that Agnes with her ideas of life, with her education, would not be content to serve as a common servant until it was proved that she could do nothing better; if it were necessary to be a servant, a servant she would be, but not in that house. Clearly, the intention of Madame Lullywick was to drive her from the house; at all events she would go and take whatever the world offered.

But there was the old longing still unsatisfied—to

know her history. When Agnes left the house and parted from Madame Lullywick, it would be final; and thus she would abandon all means of learning that part of her life hidden from her. Madame Lullywick's insinuation hurled at her had brought the thought that she might be linked with Madame Lullywick or with something that concerned her, and hence, she wished to keep her near her and under her eye; but this new demand, this leveling to a servant's place, sent her thoughts astray again and gave her unspeakable relief, for the awful thought, the black, blood-curdling suggestion that she might be a child of infamy connected with that house, could have no foundation in fact, for she had been practically ordered away from it; then there was nothing to conceal—nothing to come to light by her going out into the world.

Now for liberty! Away from that house where even the atmosphere was heavy, apparently, with dark foreboding, and lurking mystery! But before Agnes went forth on the bread and butter errand in her own behalf, she must make one more trial to uncover her past history; she would go to Madame Lullywick, tell her she was going away, and ask once more for light. She descended to the drawing room and learned from a servant that Madame Lullywick and her daughters had gone to ride, to make calls and "to shop." As Agnes returned to her room, she could not restrain the exclamation, "O, how could they do it! How could they go among people at such a time! O, I'll be free, free from this house this very day!"

When Agnes reached the top of the stairway and turned into the hall that led to her room, she saw a bunch of keys hanging in a door lock. In her composition was nothing that would lead her to spy or to peek, but now

with her mind aflame and intent on what concerned her life, her peace of mind, she remembered that she had never been inside of the room in the door of which was the bunch of keys, and had never seen the door open. The room was referred to as the "store room;" Agnes hesitated because her sense of honor held up its hands in protest against doing anything secretly—unless there was need of it—unless the ends of justice demanded. But she turned the key and went in.

It was indeed a store room, having one round window under the eaves. Rows of cast off garments on pegs lined the sides of the room, and hats, bonnets, parasols and much old-time finery was piled high on shelves. Trunks, some with the covers thrown back, filled with clothing, stood against the wall—everything out of date and dusty, and yet none of it old; that is, none of it appeared to be older than the occupancy of the house, for Agnes remembered when Madame Lullywick wore that dress, or the daughters this bit of color—were resplendent in it—in what was now faded and cast aside. No, there appeared to be nothing in this giant rag bag to throw light on anybody's early life.

In one corner, taking in the chimney, was a narrow closet with shelves crowded with odds and ends, for one of Madame Lullywick's characteristics was the persistent hoarding of everything, except money. In small things she was niggardly, even miserly; she never destroyed anything, not a scrap of paper or piece of twine, but carefully laid away where it was forgotten and the servants cast out; but in this room servants were not admitted, probably, and hence the accumulation of litter and rubbish. Thus was the room and the closet choked.

Agnes ran her hand into every shelf in search of—she knew not what. On the floor of the closet was a small,

old-fashioned cow hide trunk, torn and dilapidated. Agnes drew it out and threw back the cover, for it was not locked, and what she saw caused her to spring to her feet and exclaim; the blood mounted to her cheeks and she stood for a moment contending with conflicting emotions that came from her discovery; then she rushed to the door and locked it and placed the bunch of keys in her pocket. Ha! Had she stumbled on something that might reveal what she longed to know? To make clear, it is necessary to go back to the time when Agnes entered the Lullywick house.

When Agnes was parted from her friends in Melton —Farmer Bartley and his wife, who were like father and mother to her—when Madame Lullywick took her away much against her will, Agnes promised to write often to keep strong the bond of friendship and love between them; and one of the pleasures, almost the only one, in that dreary and lonesome time, when Agnes came to the Lullywick house, was that found in writing to her friends in Melton, and giving minute details of her life. No answers ever came, but Madame Lullywick excused the Bartleys on the ground of inability or unfamiliarity with letter writing, and encouraged Agnes to continue her letters. Two or three years Agnes wrote to the Bartleys once a month at least; then, when her studies began to engage her mind, and as no answer came, the letters grew less; but never for a moment had the kind Bartleys been forgotten; letters were not written as often as they were earlier, but several times a year she wrote and gave them all the particulars of her life.

She remembered, so vividly, how she longed for a reply to her first letter—to others that were written during the early part of her life in the Lullywick house—how she had longed for kind words and sympathy even in letters

that might come from the Bartleys. But not a word in all the six long years—and here in the hair trunk was the explanation. Every one of her letters, written with so much care, some of the early ones stained with tears, was before her; every one had been opened; then there was a reason for Madame Lullywick's encouraging her to write to the Bartleys. O perfidious woman! The letters reflected Agnes' mind, and Madame Lullywick could read it in her letters.

As she read some of the letters, the tears came in a torrent, and, again the sense of wrong, of cowardly treachery oppressed her and thrust back the tears. When she came to the Lullywick house, she had written, also, to a playmate in Melton, but no answer came and she did not write again. Was that letter here? Yes, there it was, opened like the others. O, what could this stopping of her letters mean? What was at the bottom of it? And the Bartleys, who had favored her as their own child, what must they think of her? For all their kindness to her, as far as they knew, not one word had been written in acknowledgment. Not a word of thanks and gratitude—not a message to cheer them in their lonely lives had she been able to send to them in all these years. A woman like Madame Lullywick might think that this interference with a school girl's letters was a little thing, but a beech nut under a saddle may lead to the death of the rider; everything in this world, large or small, is an aggregate of little things and some of them not in the aggregate find their way home to something or somebody with unerring certainty.

Agnes paced back and forth in the little room and accused herself of stupidity and negligence. With all her probing and suspicion, why had she not been alert enough to see—to imagine that her letters might be in-

tercepted? Had the Bartleys not written to her in all these years? Ah! They must have written! O, why had she been so blind to the meanness and duplicity that she knew was bold and defiant in that house! Agnes gathered up the letters and made a package of them, and was about to thrust the trunk back into the closet when a new thought arrested her. What else was there in that trunk? Why had the letters been placed in that particular trunk?

Eagerly, she threw out childrens' moth-eaten clothing, frocks and dresses, and near the bottom of the trunk was a blue dress and a straw hat trimmed with blue. She laid these aside, but only to catch them up again. Almost before she could give any reason for it, the action of her heart quickened; she walked to the window and looked out and came back to take up the blue dress and hat again. Sitting upon the floor now, holding her hands to her throbbing temples, Agnes tried to think—to bring back to mental sight what had been long hid—something suggested by the blue dress and the blue trimmed hat.

The sight of these things had touched a spring or opened a door, not yet wide, but turned ajar—a door of a closet of her mind that had never been opened before. Wild became the tumult in her breast as the door of the mental cupboard began to swing open. Through the afternoon, unmindful of the chilling atmosphere, Agnes sat by the trunk trying to bring the force of recollection to bear upon that door and to disclose what was stored within. And she saw this as plainly as if pictured before her on canvas: A little girl in a blue dress was walking in a paved street. She held the hand of a man who looked down upon her often and smiled lovingly. The man's face is kind, strong and handsome. And now the little girl seizes his hand in both of her own, and, looking

up to the kind face turned toward her, dances and trips along, for the hand is firm and strong and almost lifts her off her feet.

Again and again, Agnes saw this picture. She was that little girl and there before her was the dress and the hat she wore; she knows it; something tells her that that is a true picture; and nothing can break her faith in it. Ah! Have the clouds begun to disperse or will this discovery bring them together? After all, there is not much in the discovery except this: Madame Lullywick had asserted again and again that she knew nothing of Agnes' early history. But here was proof that she did know, for Agnes believed as firmly as she ever did in anything that she wore that dress and hat; in Agnes' mind, there is no question about that.

Resolved, comparatively calm, Agnes takes up the bundle of letters and the blue dress and the hat, and after replacing the trunk in the closet, leaves the room. Pausing at the head of the broad staircase, she heard voices below. The family had returned. Agnes descended quickly and goes directly to Madame Lullywick's boudoir, as she liked to call it. Madame Lullywick was standing before the mirror admiring herself in her new gown, and, indeed, Agnes thought she had never seen her in more complimentary dress. Agnes held the blue dress and hat behind her and in the other, outstretched, was the bundle of letters.

As already recorded, Madame Lullywick was not proof against surprises; she had no tact in sudden emergencies; although always on guard, yet self control was not at her bidding at the onset.

"Madame Lullywick," said Agnes earnestly, yet calmly, "you encouraged me to write to my friends in Melton, and you excused the Bartleys for not answering be-

cause they were not accustomed to letter writing. And yet you stopped every letter and opened every letter. Will you tell me why? Will you tell me why you have so cruelly deceived me, and made me appear like an ingrate to those kind people who were the best friends I have known? Why did you act such a falsehood?"

Another characteristic of Madame Lullywick was to bite her lips and stare straight before her when she was cornered and knew not which way to turn. And now, not a word came from this erect woman, standing there motionless and looking upon Agnes like one who had conquered and was waiting her own time to give the final blow. This was what startled Agnes and told her that she had not the same woman to deal with, that this woman from some cause, now stood over her in triumph and looked with merely pitying contempt upon her; there was no doubt of it; in the look and attitude was triumph, satisfaction and fear of nothing. Agnes faltered as the venomous glitter began to creep into her eyes and take on that hard, set expression that denotes rising passion of no ordinary compass; but not a word from the thin, tightly drawn lips.

"If you have nothing to say about the letters, will you tell me when and where and under what circumstances, I wore this dress and hat? And who was the man whose hand I held as I walked in the street with him? You know! Will you tell me?"

Ha! There was life in the Lullywick statue now! While Agnes spoke of the letters, she kept the dress out of sight, and when it and the hat came forth suddenly to confront her, her nerve centers revolted and sent confusion throughout the system; involuntarily one hand clutched the back of a chair and the other went to her heart; she grew white around the mouth, but her high

cheeks blazed forth as usual, for paint keeps its color although a tumult be raging beneath; her breath came short and quick; but this apparent distress passed in a moment; she conquered herself and spoke, but the voice sounded unnatural and her breath almost hissed between her teeth.

"Foolish, deluded child! Ingrate! You never wore that dress! It's Nettie's. What right have you, spy and traitor, to ransack my house in my absence? Faithless creature! Give me the dress and hat, this minute!"

Agnes held them closer and retreated a step toward the door.

"Give them to me," she shrieked, springing forward like a tigress. Agnes turned into the drawing room, passed quickly through it to the hall, slipped the bolt and ran into the street. Without shawl or hat, she ran on till she reached Mrs. Apton's house and entered by the side door, fearing that while she waited for admission at the front door, Madame Lullywick might appear. Mrs. Apton took her in her motherly arms, heard her story and comforted her. The door bell rang violently.

"Let me meet her alone, Agnes," said Mrs. Apton. "You remain in this room where you can hear what is said."

Madame Lullywick was shown in and greeted Mrs. Apton with a show of cordiality which, however, was not returned. This Madame Lullywick perceived and her eyes flashed indignantly in response.

"I called," said Madame Lullywick, in apparent solicitude, if not distress of mind, "to learn if my dear child Agnes is here. I know that she prizes your friendship highly and thought she might have come here—"

"Yes; Agnes is here."

"O, I'm so glad—so relieved to hear it! We are all

greatly concerned about her and distressed at her strange conduct. Why, it is most extraordinary! While we were out, Agnes found a dress and hat that one of my daughters wore in childhood, and, supposing that she wore them, and supposing, also, quite erroneously, I assure you, that there is some wonderful mystery connected with her early life, and that the dress and hat had some connection with it, asked me to tell her when and where she wore them, when really she never wore them at all. O, it is all so very absurd and childish. And when I requested her to give me the dress and hat and tried to reason with her, she flew into a great passion and ran out of the house.

"It is all such a strange proceeding! Though she is not my own child, she is equally beloved, for I have cared for her since she was a child—a motherless child left unprovided for and must have gone to the poor house if I had not taken pity on her. We have made such a pet of her, I fear that she is nearly spoiled. I hope she will return at once! We shall be quite undone without her. I trust you will use your influence and persuade her to return."

"Agnes is free to do as she may decide," said Mrs. Apton quietly. She called to Agnes.

Agnes entered so quickly that Madame Lullywick knew that she had been within hearing, and this fact appeared to give her a little shock, and well it might, for she had deliberately told what was false. As already referred to, Madame Lullywick had no presence of mind in sudden emergencies; her true self would stand forth for all to see in spite of all her efforts at self-control; and now the consciousness that she had been trapped, added another torch to the fire that smouldered within. But she went forward, evidently with the intention of embrac-

ing Agnes, but Agnes shrunk from her as any right-minded person might from the approach of a serpent. Baffled again, and showing it, flushed and angry, she bit her lips and resumed her seat.

"You are quite mistaken, Agnes, about the dress and hat. They are Nettie's and I prize them highly, for they remind me of the time when my children were especially dear to me. I hope, Agnes, you will return with me. Certainly, you do not intend to leave me in this strange way after all I've done for you. I suggested that you help in the house because your studies are through now, and because I thought it would be a benefit to you. If you have a home of your own sometime, you will need some knowledge of housekeeping. But if you do not wish to do as I suggested, you need not. Now return with me and think no more about it."

"I prefer to remain here," said Agnes quietly.

"Very well, then," responded Madame Lullywick, gradually throwing aside the complacent mien, or rather, losing control of herself, and beginning to show what was behind all this masking, "if you choose to turn your back on the house that has befriended you, in this shameless way, to turn traitor to the only friend you ever had, I've nothing more to say. But I wish Nettie's hat and dress returned. I want you to understand that you cannot take out of my house what does not belong to you! Remember that. Let me have them; I'll take them with me."

Now while Agnes told her story to Mrs. Apton, hurriedly, for there was not time for details, as she expected Madame Lullywick to appear, as she did, she held the dress and hat in her hand. Unconsciously, her fingers strayed upon some stiff material in the waist band of the little dress. Examining it more closely, she found that

a rent in the waist band had been neatly mended and strengthened by a card—a visiting card—sewed to the underside of the rent. On this card was written in bold round hand the name ——— ———. The name was new to Agnes. It might have no significance; merely a thrown-aside visiting card taken to mend the rent; but it must be remembered that Agnes was looking for a clue to herself, and, hence, perhaps magnified trifles. At all events, it occurred to Agnes to ask Madame Lullywick about this name; certainly, there could be no harm in that. Agnes produced the dress and drew out of the band the card.

"Madame Lullywick, who is ——— ———?"

Ah, how unfortunate for Madame Lullywick—for any deep plotter like her—to be unable to hold a taut rein over her own emotions; she made a great effort, but it made her apparent distress more prominent; she could not stay the trembling hands or quench the fire that blazed from her eyes, nor could she keep the color in her face except where art had added its touch; in such torment was she for a moment that both Mrs. Apton and Agnes arose with the intention of going to her relief. But, as usual, she recovered her composure in a measure; but she had been stirred to the last depth of her strange being.

"I'm sure, Agnes," she said in a weak voice, "I know no one of that name. It's new to me. Why do you ask? What can it be to me or to you?"

Extraordinary was the fact that a name unknown to her should cause her to gasp for breath, clutch the arm of the chair and to come very near, evidently, to the point of collapse.

"Well," exclaimed Madame Lullywick, rising, and throwing off all reserve, "if you choose to remain in this

house, have your own way. But from this moment I wash my hands of you and am glad of the opportunity to be rid of an ingrate. But give me Nettie's dress and hat! Give them to me, I say, or I'll have you arrested as a common thief!"

"I shall keep the dress and hat!" said Agnes.

"No, you will not keep them, you infamous offspring!" shrieked Madame Lullywick, now inflamed and furious. "I shall not leave this house till I get them! And you, woman," she continued, turning to Mrs. Apton, "beware of the serpent you have taken to your bosom! It will turn and sting you! She is bold and deceitful as becomes her birth—"

"Leave this house!" said Mr. Apton, who at that moment entered the room, "and never dare to set foot in it again."

Madame Lullywick glared at him, her bosom heaving, her hands opening and shutting in her frenzy. Again she screamed:

"Beware, I say, of the serpent you receive into your house! Beware of the hussy that meets men secretly in the park—that goes riding at nightfall in a closed carriage with bawdy young men—"

Mr. Apton called to a servant to summon the police. When Madame Lullywick heard this, she withdrew in haste. When the door closed upon her, Agnes, in Mrs. Apton's arms, between her sobs, said, "After what she has said, I must tell you, it is right that you should know, that I know only one man. I have met him in the park, but not by appointment; I have been to ride with him once; I have met him in the library, and not there by any arrangement, and," she continued, looking up through her tears, "I'm not ashamed of it; I believe him to be honorable; his name is Bruce—Stanley Bruce."

"What," exclaimed Mr. Apton, taking her hand and holding it, "Stanley Bruce, the reporter?"

"Yes, sir."

"I know him—know him well! A better man you could not know! More, I know his father, and occasionally do business with him! He's a Philadelphia merchant—a thorough going, upright, staunch old Quaker, and his son is like him. I'll have Stanley Bruce to dinner tomorrow if I can find him. Don't mind what that mad woman says, for she is mad; that's what the people say of her," continued Mr. Apton, addressing his wife as well as Agnes, "that she must be insane. No woman in her senses could conduct herself as she has in this last criminal failure of Lullywick—on parade, bold as brass the very day her husband was discovered to be a forger. It is hard, Agnes, to have such infamy thrust upon you or into your face, but remember that the enmity of that woman is more complimentary than her fair word. We wonder that you are what you are after living with that family of savages. But put the mad woman and her brood out of mind as much as possible. Your friends believe in you and will stand by you. Now to dinner. Let us talk no more about them. It's enough to spoil a man's appetite! Away with such trash!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

A NEST OF CRIMINALS.

The guest at the Mottle Farm, the man rescued from the Carley Prison, was striding on toward good health with courage and speed. He had had efficient help—many good props—to help him on to this destination. When he grew worse, as he did at first, and the disease appeared to be having its own way, Bruce, who was often in attendance, suggested the summoning of a doctor from the city; but Aseneth declared in many words and gestures that she had never yet seen a case of rheumatism like this that could in the end get the upper hand. She was allowed to wrestle with it and was conqueror.

The patient was now sitting up every day, getting accustomed to a state of freedom and making plans for the future. The suit provided by Bruce, too large for the patient, was turned over to Plym—a good fit and a better suit than he had ever worn. During this enjoyable time of convalescence, the Mottle guest, as he may be called, learned the facts connected with his rescue. His admiration for Plym was unbounded. Playfully or in earnest, he declared, when he knew what part Plym had taken in the rescue, "Plym, you are my boy! I adopt you from this moment!"

The guest never tired of hearing, nor Plym of telling, of the swinging down from the tree on the pignut bender, his falling from the oak onto the driver of the carriage and his undoing of Constable Budd. And all the crack cooks with foreign postmarks on them—all the puffed

up stewards of Oldport could not so tempt and lead on and coax into hearty fullness the shirking appetite of enfeebled man as Aseneth Mottle. During this crisis when rheumatism was on its high horse and riding at full speed (which Aseneth soon checked by getting her hand on the bridle rein) Sis' Ann was brought or induced to come into mild and useful subjection and became, as Plym remarked in confidence to his uncle one day, "almost like er real likely woman." Rebecca at last, weary of watching at the knot hole in the barn for the departure of her enemy, came down cautiously, and, foot by foot, as if stalking game, ventured into the kitchen, and, at length, purred in peace and thankfulness on the rocking chair cushion. Stump, however, long before Rebecca descended from her perch, had accepted things as they were and preserved his dignity, passing the object of his disregard loftily and in silence and refusing with an indignant growl to take a bone from her hand which she offered one day out of the surplus of good feeling that came with the patient now in the guest chamber.

And now the time had come to march on the Carleys. The reader, not giving the subject proper consideration, may wonder at the course of events. If the discovery had been made that the man held there was a prisoner unlawfully, the law would free him immediately. True, and also is it true that the law, or what might pass for law, might thrust the prisoner deeper into jail. When Bruce learned that this man could pass through bolted doors, thoughtlessly, he lost faith, not in the man, but in his right or ability to help him; but a careful inspection of the facts presented the case in a different light.

If the prisoner had gone forth as he attempted to do once, insufficiently clad, and applied to the first farmhouse for assistance, the Carleys at his heel sooner or

later, what would have been the result? Doubtless, he would have been declared of unsound mind and would have been thus disposed of; and if he had won the confidence and sympathy of someone willing to help him, there was the Lullywick pile of gold to defeat him in any court of justice, so called. The world knows by experience that professional opinions in relation to sanity are in the market and ready to be sold to the highest bidder. What chance, then, for this imprisoned man going directly from his cell, without friends or identification, to contend with fiends who had unlimited resources.

No. The only way to win was first to steal a march on the jailers—escape as quietly as possible, secure identification, make the case strong and then proceed. The object was first to get the prisoner away, even if in the meanwhile (between escape and proving of case) the persons guilty of misdemeanor escaped. The Carleys and all others concerned were to feel the rope's end of the law if it were possible to apply it to them; but the rescue of the prisoner was the first act of importance whether punishment was dealt out to the Carleys and others or not.

It was believed, however, that as soon as their prisoner disappeared the Carleys would make good use of their legs. While justice (if she had her eye band off and a chance to hold her befogged headpiece in her hands) might weep over the escape of these rascals, yet the real culprits would remain, probably, and, it was hoped, would be brought to judicial slaughter and be beheaded properly. But great was the surprise of all, who knew the facts, to learn that the Carleys still preserved the even tenor (rather a growling bass) of their way—going to and fro with minds free, evidently, from any care, loitering in usual laziness and insolence around Jim Lambert's

den of iniquity. As far as anyone could learn, they had not even made search for their former prisoner. This was inexplicable at this stage; the man had escaped; that was a fact, at least, and the Carleys must know that he would make good use of his tongue.

Plym was the man who noted all these things and a good detective he proved to be. He reported to Bruce and Bruce conferred with Captain Bonny, who was eager to do something and believed the time had come to strike home. "I don't know what it all means," said Captain Bonny when Bruce told him that the Carleys were loitering around unconcerned, "but I'll tell you how to find out and sift the whole matter to the bottom! And it's time, I tell you! The old man is all right now! They can't trouble him! There's too many of us on his side! We'll go down and grab the Carleys and run the risk. Shadler has not been seen since Lullywick took himself off. He may be there, too. I want him for swindling his landlady and for collecting the rent twice from a family that moved out of the Lullywick hovel. We'll explore that Carley house from attic to cellar and see what there is there. Sorry to trouble that fumble-thumb down there—that Budd, but we must. I wish we could run in under his nose, and give him a sniff of the game afterward, but the law won't allow it."

At the time appointed, about eight o'clock in the evening, Plym met Captain Bonny and two other officers in citizen's dress at the station below Ourtown. As the entrance to Pignut Lane on the Bull Pen Pike, they were joined by Bruce, Paige, Wainworth and Budd's deputy, for it was arranged that Budd should be notified at the last minute in the hope that he might be away from home. That was the result, and his deputy must represent him. Through Pignut Lane they approached the

Carley house, Plym running ahead like a deer to reconnoitre. He came back to say that the way was clear, that he looked into the kitchen window and saw Jack and Aleck smoking by the fire. Plym knocked on the kitchen door, as the front door was obstructed by the fallen porch. The door was opened quickly by Jack.

"Hu-hullo, Jack!" said Plym, "how be ye! J-jest come ter make ye er leetle call!"

Captain Bonny and his two officers brushed by Plym and laid hold of Jack. He lifted his arm to strike and to resist, but he was not quick enough; taken by surprise, he surrendered as he must, and was placed in irons in less time than it takes to tell it. Aleck in the next room, submitted without protest as though he expected it, and hung his head. Jack, however, met his capture with his usual bravado.

"So you thought you'd make us a little call, did you, Plym? I thought you were a chap of some taste and decency and went only in good company! Where'd you fall in with this mob? By ———, Plym," continued Jack, suddenly animated by a new idea, "have you, too, been meddling—have you had a hand in anything not concerning you? Come, now, speak up!"

But Plym only laughed at him.

"But you," said Jack, addressing the Captain, "thou man of stature and stomach, what is the meaning of this? Why is this quiet pastoral home invaded at this hour of the night by such a crowd of chumps? My burly friend, 'twould have been far more polite if you had waited till invited to enter. My advice to every d——d one of you is to get into a kindergarten and learn manners! Such manners on the part of men who look so well and dress so much better, surprises me—"

"Do you know a man named Shadler?" asked the Captain.

"Shadler, Shadler?" mused Jack, thoughtfully. "Seems to me I've heard the name before. Where does he live and what's his business?"

"Out with it!" said the Captain. "Where is your friend Shadler? No more of your guff!"

"Aleck," said Jack, "do you know a man by the name of—of Shad-ler? If you do, this gentleman would like to know."

"Where is Mr. Jeremy Shadler?" asked the Captain again.

"Well, sir, thou noble leader of an ignoble crew, if I knew, I might tell you and I might not; if I knew and should tell you, then you would know and would not have the pleasure of looking for him, if perchance a gentleman of the name of Shadler were wanted."

"When did you see Shadler last?" asked the Captain, who appeared to be pleased with Jack's evasion.

"Well, sir; if I knew a gentleman by the name of Shadler, kept diary, and was allowed at this moment to consult it, I might be able to tell you when I last saw the gentleman of the name of Shadler; but if I did not know the gentleman of the name of Shadler, I could not tell you, even though I did or did not keep a diary, when I last saw the gentleman of the name of Shadler."

"Well," said the Captain, laughing, "I hope you understand all that!"

At that moment, a movement in the room overhead caught the Captain's ear. Leaving one of his men to guard Jack and Aleck, the Captain followed by all others in the party, ascended by the front stairway. In the room over the kitchen, chained to a large block of iron, was the man called Milo, the night watchman. As soon

as Captain Bonny saw him, he uttered an exclamation of surprise and rushed forward; he held the candle full in the face of the shrinking man.

"Well, well! What are you doing here?" asked the Captain in astonishment. "I have you at last; we throw the net for other fish and catch you! Gentleman, behold Mr. Peter Mills, a noted safe-cracker and burglar and all-around bad man, aye, and dangerous, too, when at large; for whom a reward of $2,500 is now standing for his capture—for a big job done about a year ago. Well, well, this is luck and $2,500 for somebody! We'll be sure to take him along with us when we go! But the gentleman of the name of Shadler, where is he? He must be here! The dodging talk of that Jack Carley shows possibly that he is not far away!"

Bruce, however, did not share the Captain's opinion as to the presence of Shadler; if he had been in or around the house, when they entered, he had had opportunity to get quickly beyond reach; and he regretted deeply that such a low rascal, the go-between the principal and the agents in this business, should escape. Paige, also, was interested in the capture of Shadler, not only on account of his complicity with the Carleys, but because he had attempted to scandalize the name of Mary Latwell. As they passed into the hall from the room where the burglar had been found, Bruce whispered to Captain Bonny, "I want you to see the room in which I staid—the room where we gagged the night watchman." "Yes," returned the Captain, "I intend to see all the rooms."

The door to the room occupied by Bruce as the peddler, was locked, and Bruce ran below for the key. It was found with others in Jack's pocket, but Jack, now sulky and fast losing his bravado, refused to point out the key. Aleck, however, told which one it was, and

received Jack's curses for this accommodation. No light was in the room and no fire gave it cheerful warmth. The occupant had gone to bed to keep warm. The Captain approached the bed and held the sputtering candle near what appeared to be the head of the form on the bed covered with old cornsacks and his own clothing. The occupant of the bed was awake, but did not move at first, supposing, perhaps, that his jailers had come to visit him; but the sound of many feet caused him to rise up, and thrust his head out of the cornsacks. Mr. Jeremy Shadler. He was bound like the burglar with a chain around one ankle attached to a weight, and a forlorn, pitiable object he was—unwashed, cold and probably hungry, judging by his sunken eyes and trembling hands—so miserable and wretched did he appear that the Captain suppressed his exultation, and said nothing except to bid Shadler to dress. Handcuffed, Shadler was led below with the burglar. The looks exchanged by Jack and Shadler were far from friendly. Jack laughed and exclaimed:

"So they've found you, too, have they Shad! I thought they'd scent you out. This old buffer here appears to have the knack of poking his finger into other people's business. I tried to reason with him and the ill-mannered crew with him, and tried to throw them off your track, so you could be free, Shad, but they wouldn't listen to me."

"It's well they did find me," said Shadler. "You would have left me here to starve, you dog!"

"Left you to starve!" sneered Jack. "I thought I was doing you a favor. Humph! If there is anything I despise more than another it is the exhibition of ingratitude on the part of a friend, especially in return for a kind and considerate act. I wash my hands of you, Mr.

Jeremy Shadler, and will have nothing more to do with you. When we meet again, you will please do me the favor not to recognize me!"

Now Bruce wished to show Captain Bonny and Paige the room where the prisoner had been held and to point out the different steps of the rescue, but, unfortunately, as Bruce and Paige considered it, two other city reporters were present. How the two reporters learned of the intended capture will be explained later. Captain Bonny intended to make a sweeping search of the house, but the two reporters who had suddenly appeared, kept at the Captain's elbow, note book in hand; they must learn, ultimately, the cause of this search and arrest, but the object on the part of Bruce and Paige was to keep the important and central facts in the background as long as possible, for they had a right to consider the rescue of the prisoner as their own "exclusive"—an interesting story of which their respective papers should have the benefit to the exclusion of all others. And, now, the finding of the burglar might throw the two sharp reporters away from the main line of discovery; if Captain Bonny had not said so much about his surprise at finding the burglar, the reporters might have considered his capture the object of the Captain's visit. But, at all events, the Carley prisoner must be covered up till the last minute. Bruce managed to whisper in the Captain's ear to this effect, although he knew that the Captain treated all reporters impartially, and would tell no lies; and Bruce wished him to tell no lies; but he need not volunteer to give any information not asked for.

Captain Bonny stood by the fire warming his hands as he turned to Jack and said: "You're keeping quite a jail here! Have you anybody else ironed up to a block and obliged to go to bed with their chains on?"

"You ought to be satisfied, you old sharper, with getting what you have—a gentleman of the name of Shadler and the doughty Milo and the $2,500 offered for him. I rather wanted that $2,500 myself, but I never go back on a friend—"

"You lie!" shouted the burglar, fiercely. "You were going to give me up that night when the man come out of the tree! And when you got me again, you were going to do it as soon as you dared! I can go to jail and be happy now that Jack Carley has got to the end of his rope."

"Well," exclaimed the Captain in good humor, "prisoners are not allowed, usually, to be so free with their tongues; but if you are permitted to talk, we'll find out what we want to. Have you anybody else in your jail? Perhaps another reward is lying around in some of these rooms—"

"Yes, there is somebody else!" exclaimed Aleck. "He's in the ell!"

Jack laughed and exclaimed: "Now their eyes will open! I'd give a dollar to go along and see the fun. I say, Captain, take me along, will you? He's a man I love and I want to see if you treat him right! Ha! Ha! Do, Captain! I ask it as a last favor!"

As Aleck spoke, the Captain wheeled around and looked at him with surprise. His question in regard to other prisoners was a bantering one; he did not suspect that any others were held unless the aunt, Hitty Carley, of whom Bruce had told him, was restrained; even this had not occurred to him as a possibility, for bad as the Carleys were, or as Jack Carley was, it was not supposed that he would play such tricks with the woman that had done so much for him. But who could this other prisoner be? Everyone was interested afresh in this new dis-

covery. Aleck pointed out the key to the ell door and the key to the room in which they would find the other prisoner. On the tip-toe of expectation and wonder, all followed the Captain and Bruce, who carried the bunch of keys. At last they are in the room occupied by the man whom Bruce had helped to escape. The former prisoner had made some attempt at cleanliness and order, but now the room was in filthy confusion.

The prisoner, whoever he was, was in bed with his face to the wall, trying, like Shadler, to keep warm under a heap of rags. The Captain leaned over the bed and held the candle near the head of the man who had not moved since they entered. Then he sprang up into a sitting posture; his arms came out of the bed, stretched before him and clutched the bed clothing; he eyed his captors like a hunted beast brought to bay and waiting the death stroke. There, clutching the bed clothing, breathing hard, was he who had been known as the Hon. Theodore Lullywick.

Everyone in the room, when he realized who this pitiable object was, could not repress an exclamation of surprise, and everyone took a step backward; no one present, perhaps, could resist the impulse to contrast this wretched creature with unshaven, unclean face and bloodshot eyes with the former stately and elegant Lullywick. The Captain, who had a soft place in his heart for the worst criminal when brought to the end of his villainy (and could do no more harm), sat down on the cobbler's bench standing near the bed and looked at Lullywick a moment compassionately, in spite of what he knew about him and all that was charged to his account.

Lullywick wore the same chain that held the former prisoner, and occupied the same bed; he had suffered as the other suffered, aye, and perhaps more. The Captain

ordered him to rise and dress, and without a word he complied. In handcuffs, he, too, was led to the kitchen. When Jack Carley saw him, he laughed again. "Well, old man," said Jack, addressing Lullywick, "so they've got you, too! Well, you had a chance to try a little of your own medicine—that good and wholesome medicine you ordered for the benefit of our mutual friend who took himself off just in time to make room for you. How do you like it?"

"We'll have no more of this talk!" said the Captain to Jack. "Please keep quiet till you are called upon to speak! Now we shall examine the house. I understand there's a lady here who's had no hand in this business, but has been compelled to stay against her will. We do not wish to disturb her or intrude on her privacy. If she is here, she will understand. Is she here? How shall we find her? What room is she in?"

"In this room," replied Jack, pointing to a door leading from the kitchen. She's sick, and if you have any gentlemanly instincts, you will not disturb her. Look anywhere you like in the house, but do not thrust yourself into her room, or attempt to call her out of it. Let her alone. She had nothing to do with this business and always opposed it, and if you are a gentleman, as you claim to be probably, and not a beast and ruffian, as your appearance indicates, you will not further belittle yourself by casting indignity upon that innocent woman. She'll have enough to bear without your adding to it, and there's no need. Do what you will to me, but let my Aunt Hitty go free of molestation. I tell you, she's sick and has not been out of her bed for three days. You cannot have the cruelty to summon her before you—to order her out of her bed that you may search the house. Bah! What do you want to search the house for? There

are no more crooks held here. If you won't believe me, perhaps you'll believe Aleck. He'll tell you there's no more here. But let Hitty alone or by ——— you shall repent of it!"

Jack Carley overshot the mark this time. Captain Bonny had been too long in the service to be caught in this way. The more Jack said, the more suspicious the Captain became. Jack was trying to conceal something, and while he stood for a moment looking at Jack, attention was drawn to Aleck. He sat against the wall and Lullywick and the man who stood beside him were partly in front of Aleck. With his elbows on his knees and his face in his manacled hands, Aleck was trying to suppress his emotion; but in vain; he began to sob and the tears rolled through his fingers. Giving away at last, he swayed to and fro, groaning and sobbing. A sudden change came over Jack when he saw Aleck's distress. He jumped out of his chair, livid, fierce and shouted, "Aleck!"—only the name, spoken as a warning, and followed up by fearful oaths. Aleck became, however, more demonstrative, whereupon Jack made a movement as though he would throw himself, despite his bonds, upon his brother.

During this scene, everyone looked on in wonder and increasing interest. What was coming? What would this strange house disclose next? At last Plym, standing near Aleck, asked, "Whar's Hi-Hitty, Aleck?"

"She's dead!" groaned Aleck, rising abruptly and sitting down again. Jack almost frothed at the mouth and became so furious in speech and gesture that one of the officers forced him back into his chair and stood by him, keeping his hand upon his shoulder. To all of those present who knew the facts in the case, this was more than

an announcement of death, at any rate, it suggested more.

"When'd she d-die?" asked Plym.

"Last Friday night."

"Where? Ri-right here'n this house?"

"Yes. He didn't mean to do it!" shouted Aleck, rising and sobbing and choking. "It was an accident. He was to blame, but, O God, he didn't mean to do it!" Becoming calmer, Aleck went on. "When they brought home Lullywick, Hitty said she wouldn't stay another minute and packed up her things. Jack said she shouldn't go. She said she would. She went to the door there to go out, and Jack pushed her back. She fell and her head struck the stove. She didn't speak again nor open her eyes. O my God! But he didn't mean to do it, I tell you!"

"Where's the body?"

"We carried her over to Hokopokonoket Swamp and laid her down so it would appear that she'd wandered into the swamp and died there. O God, forgive me! And she was the kindest, dearest woman in the world to me and to us both. And after all she'd done for us to be carried out like a dog and left in the swamp. Jack swore he'd kill me if I did not do what he told me to do; he made me do it; he's always made me do everything; but that's no excuse for me. I say again, he didn't mean to do it—it was an accident! Before God, I know it was an accident!"

"Whar 'beouts'd ye leave her?" asked Plym.

"Near the big ledge, where there's a big pine splintered by lightning. Will you go there and—and see?"

"Yis, I will. Didn't ye go nigh ther place sence ye left her thar?"

"No. Jack covered me with a revolver and threatened to brain me if I did."

The house was searched from cellar to attic quickly. No more prisoners were found, but the two gripsacks containing the Lullywick spoils were found intact. The Carleys were appalled by the amount of money they contained, and could not immediately dispose of it or get it out of their hands into banks without arousing suspicion. Ready to depart, Lullywick and his agent Shadler were joined together by temporary bonds; Jack and the burglar came next and Aleck brought up the rear. Aleck called to Plym.

"Plym, I don't expect to see this place very soon again. Take my horse, or better put him out of his misery, and the two cows and the poultry. Give me what they are worth or take them for nothing. And if there's anything in the house you want, help yourself. And look here, Plym. All Hitty's things are in her room—the room out of the kitchen. Find her sister, will you? She's somewhere in the city, or was, and send her Hitty's things and anything else she wants out of the house. Will you do that, Plym? Do you agree, Jack?"

Jack was a man of quick passion and humor; a few minutes he was wild and furious; but the secret was out now, cursing and denunciation were vain and Jack relapsed into the usual form of speech. "Yes," he replied in answer to Aleck's question, "I suppose I'll have to. And, Plym, look after the place and see that nobody carries it off. In one of the closets out of the kitchen, you'll find a few drops of rare old stuff, and in the cellar, the finest brand of three-year-old you ever tasted—the kind that played the devil with your friend, the parson, that fine day when he went preaching a sermon to the ants in their own domicile. I'd given this crowd a horn all

around if that d——d Captain hadn't been so hoggish and tried to take the whole village back to town with him. He wasn't content with getting Milo, worth $2,500 to him, but he must unnecessarily poke around and disturb that fine gentleman of the name of Shadler and that surpassing, lordly creation, the Hon. Theodore Lullywick, who had such important business in New York a while back."

The procession was ready to move now, and the Captain cut short Jack's mutterings, and ordered him to preserve silence during the journey to the city. Plym, Wainworth and the Ourtown deputy constable started immediately for Hokopokonoket Swamp to search for the body of Hitty Carley. But nothing was found, and they came to the conclusion, as did the people in the town when they knew the facts, that probably Aleck Carley had told only a part of the truth; and the belief grew that Hitty had been murdered, or had lost her life in the way related by Aleck, perhaps, and the body concealed.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BUDDING OF BUDD.

Ourtown came out of its lethargic sleep, rubbed its eyes, was fairly awake at last, and looked abroad, staring and blinking in astonishment akin to unbelief. Never before in its history, according to the oldest inhabitant (the cobbler over near Pipping Brook) had the town been so torn and distracted by what it might call its own. Business, what there was, in the boat houses on the beach around Periwinkle Basin, in the shops and stores scattered throughout the town, everywhere except in Jim Lambert's saloon, where business appeared to revive a little—everywhere, it must be said, business sat down to rest and waited for somebody to give it attention.

No man, woman or child was free from present excitement to give heed to daily occupation, if they had any, or to offer a helping hand to anything except to spread the surprising news that had come to town by the morning mail. Nothing was in demand except the morning paper from the city and nothing to do except to read it and add the comments. At the postoffice, Captain Swift (the slowest reader in the world) was reading the account of the great capture the night before in the Carley woods. At Deacon Balm's grocery store, Salem Brinley had an audience of twenty or more, passing over, in his haste to reach the climax, all words of more than two syllables. The capture of Lullywick was the great

thing and the murder of Hitty Carley was the awful thing according to Ourtown analysis.

Deacon Lint, chopping wood in his front yard, first heard the news from a neighbor passing by. His axe was raised to deal a severing blow, but he forgot to lower it, and held his arm and axe aloft till he heard the whole story. The voice of the Rev. Tallyho exploded in front of the postoffice like a bomb, but no one was injured. Constable Budd, to a little group down by the pharmacy, declared boldly that he had lost a deal of sleep thinking about the Carleys, and had great suspicions and many of them that would have led to something in a very few days, but he wanted to be sure of his game before he made a strike. His hearers, however, groaned and shouted in derision, and an ill-smelling goose egg missed his head by a quarter of an inch and left its mark on the side of the pharmacy just above him, and warned him that the safest place for him and his boasts was at home.

All the boys and young men, as well as some of the older men, began to search in Hokopokonoket Swamp for the body of Hitty Carley; and the Carley Pond and the water in brooks and pools near the swamp was dragged, but nothing was discovered. Bruce and Paige were wide awake reporters and versed in all the tricks that led to "exclusives." They realized the importance of the quick handling of news for the exclusive benefit, if possible, of their respective papers. When the time came, a story they would be able to tell, and their connection with the facts assured them that when the story was told, the "Open Eye" and the "Morning Waker" would be the only custodians of it. Their interest in the man rescued and the establishment of his rights, led them to keep silence till there was a necessity for it no longer.

Ourtown received the news in advance of the time planned by Bruce and Paige as may be here described.

When Captain Bonny and the two officers with him hurried into the railway station by a side door and hastily boarded an outgoing train, Mr. Nipps of the "Piping Crier" happened to be strolling through the station on the outlook for any trifle of news by which he might convince his employers that he was trying to earn his salary, not hoping, probably, for railway accidents of any kind that might show that two trains meeting on the same track had decided the right of way according to the plan of the two goats face to face on a narrow bridge; nor did he look hopefully for reports of exploded locomotives and expect to see carloads of dead and mangled bodies and contributory surgeons rolled into the station; but willing, if the case demanded, to write staring headlines and to follow in a frenzy of small type.

While Nipps was turning to and fro in his mind this extraordinary behaviour on the part of Captain Bonny, the mercury of his interest and zeal mounted quickly to the boiling point when he saw Mr. Muff of the "Daily Liar" (said to be the only paper in the city that told the truth), whose name (Muff's) as a catcher of news belied him, appear suddenly and get on board the train. Enough for Nipps. Something was in the wind—a good strong scent from somewhere—worth attending to at once. He would follow the sly Bonny in citizen's dress and the crafty Muff, who had rushed aboard with such speed and stealth.

Nipps passed through the cars till he found Muff, who evidently was not pleased to see him, and looked resolutely out of the window intent on studying a baggage truck. Nipps, a social and humorous being, laughed as he settled into the seat by the side of Muff and noted the

melancholy cast of Muff's countenance—the twist of disappointment that Nipps' coming had given it.

"No use!" said Nipps. "I saw Bonny and his two strikers steal aboard and then I saw you come out of hiding somewhere and run to the train as though the police were after you! I have both eyes on you now and I don't intend to take them off till I know what's up."

"Humph!" grunted Muff, "is that all you saw?"

"That's enough, Mr. Muff! I know that you are on the track of something. Now, I'll make a proposition. Although I'm not on speaking terms with your paper—the truthful 'Daily Liar'—and do not seek the honor—indeed, any man who dared to breath the name of your paper, even in a whisper in our office, would be discharged—no, no—not discharged, but fired, sir, simply fired from the back door with the chasing iron—still chasing—making sixty miles an hour, in quick pursuit—yet—the front wheels of this vehicle of thought which I am now making use, Mr. Muff, that is, the antecedental clause, strange as it may appear, are and is somewhere in the rear of my discourse—yet, I say, in spite of the frigidity that stands as a wall between you and me, I mean our respective papers, I make the suggestion that we go snacks and halvings and swap for keeps when we even up at the end of the race."

"Unfortunately, I am compelled to enter a snacking trade dicker with you, but it cuts to the inner quickness to contribute even indirectly to the prosperity, if it has any, of that 'Piping, Squeaking Crier' which you represent. Why, sir, any man who dared to refer to the 'Piping Crier' in our office, never'd have the blessed opportunity of making his exit with a chasing iron in full cry. He'd never see the light of day again!"

"Well, now to business! What's the game?" asked Nipps.

"I don't know; but Bruce and Paige are in the smoker. Bruce and Paige and Bonny have had much private confab lately; I caught them at it in Bonny's back office several times—quiet as cheese nibbling mice in a trap when I entered. I saw Bonny and his two boys and Bruce and Paige leave the headquarters and go in different directions; I followed Bonny, and since I came into the car, Bruce and Paige appeared on the other side and sneaked in."

"They'll find," added Nipps, "that our eyes and ears are in their prime and on duty, and that our legs are keyed up to keep pace with them. There's something good ahead, and we'll have it!"

At Ourtown, Bruce and Paige left the train, but Captain Bonny and his officers went on to the station below, where, as already described, Plym was in waiting. Nipps and Muff followed, and coming upon a farmer, driving leisurely, they thrust money into his hands and urged him to follow the wagon in which rode Captain Bonny. A little money will go a great way in Ourtown, especially in the slack time of the year, and the slack time to a large number of the inhabitants covered twelve months of the year. The farmer, now in the service of Nipps and Muff, asked no questions and went on at a quick pace, having a young horse not now, if ever, overburdened with work.

When Captain Bonny's wagon turned into the lane—Pignut Lane—from Bull Pen Pike, and Bruce, Paige, Wainworth and the Ourtown deputy sheriff appeared, Nipps and Muff dismissed their coachman, and on foot followed the silent company. Dark as midnight in the lane, they kept near, yet out of sight, till they reached the

yard of the Carley mansion. When the door opened and Captain Bonny and his men rushed in, Nipps and Muff slipped in, too. Captain Bonny was a favorite with all reporters and aided all impartially. He stared at Nipps and Muff a moment and then laughed and went on with what he had to do.

Paige and Bruce laughed, too, if they were a little disappointed. They were not held up and helped on by petty jealousies; they could see merit in a competitor and applaud even if he did run across their path and intercept them. Bruce intended to remain at the Mottle Farm over night and Paige with Wainworth; but now they must return to the city and prepare for the morning paper the record of the night's work at the Carley Farm, otherwise Nipps and Muff, or their papers, would have all the glory. Thus it happened that the people of Ourtown, thanks to Nipps and Muff, read several columns of history of their Carley neighbors the next day as soon as the city papers came to town. But Bruce and Paige had cause to rejoice. While it must have been apparent to Nipps and Muff that Captain Bonny's visit to the Carley Mansion was not to arrest anyone found there, except Jack and Aleck Carley, yet the discovery of the forger Lullywick and the murder of Hitty Carley, gave their minds so much to contend with, that they forgot, if they ever thought of it, to make inquiries as to the prime cause of the expedition to Ourtown. Later the story in all its details appeared in the "Open Eye" and the "Morning Waker" exclusively, and Nipps and Muff were no wiser till they read it.

Fortunate for Ourtown that it received a part of the story at one time and the other later. Better to take in two doses and learn to live under the first and to brace for the second. When all did come, and the people

realized what rascality had had vantage ground within the town's fair domain, they cried with a loud voice—heard from Three Pint Six Corners to Bowleg Turnpike—"Who's responsible?" And the answer, quite as loud and far-reaching, was "Budd!"

The people were aroused, and indignation, hand in hand with righteous wrath, stalked forth and demanded to be heard.

In Little Wig Hamlet, all the big and little wigs wagged together and united in sending word to headquarters in Ourtown Village to the effect "We won't have Budd to rule over us!"

The Thorney Brookers declared in a meeting called for the purpose, "Enough of Budd!"

Sodom, a settlement of eight houses and eleven barns, rose up to say, "Budd must budge!"

And Gommorrah, across the creek from Sodom, not to be outdone by its neighbor, of which it had not a high opinion, made known that "Budd must be budded!" that is, nipped off.

The honest and worthy dwellers in Gridiron Flats shouted loud enough to be heard at Twin Peak, "Thet 'ere Budd sha'n't be erlowed ter come ter bustin' bloomin' ergin in this 'ere teown," and he wasn't.

Budd heard the warning cry and heeded it. At the next election, the office fell to his deputy, a quiet man, who had done all that had been done in the town in bringing offenders to justice. In the main street of Ourtown Village, on a high board fence, appeared one morning, a huge cartoon, roughly drawn on cotton cloth, representing a turtle running and Constable Budd in pursuit. On the back of the turtle was a coop from which chicken heads, goose heads, turkey heads protruded. Budd was running at a high rate of speed—hat flying off

—great drops of perspiration were splashing down, and he was saying (painted in big letters over his head), "I'll have him in a few days!"

When the news spread, the people throughout the town came to see the cartoon and sat down before it and laughed till weary. And they said:

"Few days? Lor', he'll want er fortnight ter ketch up!"

"I tell ye, ther turtle's got ther bulge on'm! No use er tryin'!"

"No use er talkin'! No Budd thet ever growed yit kin keep up with a reel lively turtle like thet!"

"Ye kin see ther turtle's er gittin' erway purty fast!"

"Budd's jest er humpin' hisself, but he ain't what ye'd call er reel good match fer a business turtle like thet! He ain't in it!"

"Kinder sorry fer Budd arter all! He's er dewin' o' his best an' er strainin' ev'ry narve, but ther turtle'll give him ther dust ev'ry time, ef I'm any jedge o' racin'."

" 'Tain't er fair race, anyway! Ther turtle's got four legs an' Budd only tew ter depend on! What kin ye expect?"

"Heow long did ye say Budd's ben on his track? Few days, eh! Lor', ther turtle's got his second wind long erfore this, an' ther ain't no speck o' chance fer Budd."

"Budd looks ready ter give up any momint! Might's well!"

"Ther turtle needn't hurry so! He might jest's well go inter camp an' cook er chicken an' invite his friends ter dinner! Time 'nough 'fore Budd'll git within er mile o' 'm."

"Tell ye what! I think thet 'ere turtle's goin' slow jest ter make Budd b'lieve he kin ketch'm! But Budd, ain't he er scratchin'!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE TUGGING OF TALLYHO.

Great events may or may not, according to circumstances, cast their shadows before, but they leave always, among other things, a streak of light behind—something from which a lesson may be drawn and a moral may be given point, sharp, more or less, as importance and the occasion require. As this ray of light, beginning its travels and springing from the culmination of evil at the Carley Mansion and running into every household in Ourtown, might not be received as an ordinary visitor and thus lose its force as a moral prick and lever, the Rev. Lacroix Tallyho preached up to "seventhly" on the reception of the first report, and went wildly beyond all reckoning, when the full account appeared. But nowhere in these "powerful discourses" did he attribute the result of anything or anybody to the moderate or immoderate use of bottled cider.

During the week following Tallyho's first peroration, the Dorcas was held at the house of a parishioner in the Twin Ox District. Aseneth Mottle, making an afternoon call upon Mrs. Tallyho the day before, learned that the Tallyho vehicle of general conveyance and utility, a lumbering carryall, had retired for rest and repair to the shop of the wheelwright. Eager to aid her neighbors, particularly her pastor, Aseneth offered the use, jointly, of their capacious market wagon. Probably, if Sandy had been consulted, he might have made remonstrance and arranged or suggested a more evenly balanced ac-

commodation; if his master furnished wagon, why should not Tallyho supply motive power and strap his own slow nag to it? To contribute wagon and load it down with all that heaviness and dead weight of the Tallyho kind, not to mention the Mottle family, very heavy and solid on the female side, and then ask Sandy, now along in years and entitled to be treated with some show of respect, to tug all that hanging-back, shoulder-galling load to Twin Ox District, just after supper, too, probably, was more than any sensible, independent horse could submit to without saying neigh to it. But as the sequel showed, Sandy was not taxed unduly on a full stomach, and thought, probably, if horses do think, about which there is no doubt, that the uneven ways of men and the ups and downs in life, do have some regard for horses, or lead to results that amount to positive advantage.

Early in the afternoon, Plym, wearing a flaming red necktie, was driver for his aunt and Mrs. Tallyho, conducting them with proper decorum, on his part and that of Sandy's, to the place where the Dorcas was to be held. When the good things—pies, cakes, preserves—contributions to the Dorcas supper, were taken out of the wagon, Mrs. Tallyho discovered that a loaf of cake, with a frosted roof and a pinacle with a little angel ready to fly from it, made by the aid of a new cook book and such ingredients as Ourtown afforded, had been left behind.

As the Dorcas supper was a round up of nightmarish things, deliberate concoctions of good and innocent (in the simple) ingredients of which the fabricators (enemies of the human stomach) bid for each other's opinion, Mrs. Tallyho could not lose the opportunity to exhibit and to test the result of her compounding and her culinary skill. Thereupon, Plym was ordered to return immediately for the frosted cake with the pinacle and the flying angel.

Aseneth cautioned Plym to go straight back and not loiter a minute by the way. She whispered to him, "Plym, ye do look like eour ol' gobler with thet fire red scaf on yer neck! Ye've got plenty purtier ones that ain't helf so flauntin'! Ther folks'll think ye're er fire, an' put up ther han's ter warm!"

Plym drove away toward Ourtown Village unmoved by any remarks about the fiery nature of his necktie. When Plym approached Jem Grimshaw's place and saw the smoke curling up from Jem's cosy workshop where Jem mended strained and broken backed tools and farm gear in general, he could not resist the temptation to stop, chat with Jem and gather the news. Driving into the barn floor, Plym left Sandy under a warm blanket near the hay mow, into the centre of which he might eat his way, if he stayed long enough, and then walked in upon Jem hammering at a plow beam.

In this warm retreat with the kicking fire in the funnel stove and a basket of Pumpkin Sweet apples at hand, and Jem's easy going tongue to entertain, Plym loitered and enjoyed himself. "No use o' hurryin'," thought Plym, "thet angel wo-won't git er chance ter fly erfore six erclock when sup-supper's got ready! Time er-nough!" When Plym was beginning on the seventeenth Pumpkin Sweet, the darkened shop reminded him that night was near and that if he intended to return to Twin Ox District before six o'clock, he must start and give his (or Sandy's) heels wings.

Usually the "men folks" attended the Dorcas in time to get their part of the cookery conglomerates, but on this occasion, Tallyho must attend to urgent business in the city, and would not return in time to reach the Dorcas before half past seven. Therefore, as Tallyho, and probably his boy Harold, was to ride with Arche-

laus and Plym, they must wait for him. This was agreeable to Archelaus and to Plym, not that Tallyho and his young hopeful were to be passengers, but that there would be less of the Dorcas for them. Archelaus, as Aseneth remarked often, was "no hand fer company." Plym was awkward and knew it, and although it was a painful sacrifice to let so many broad and well filled pies, so many Canterbury fritters, so many Jerusalem jumbles and so much angel cake and Twin Ox flapjack go by without even a taste, yet the Dorcas was long, however short the time he remained. Aseneth often reproved him for what she called, "foolish shrinkin' erway from folks." Plym remarked that if he could go to the Dorcas in his every day suit, keep his hat on, have Stump with him and be at liberty to make free with a pocketful of apples, there might be some enjoyment in a Dorcas.

As Plym, now arrived in Ourtown Village, was approaching the side door of the Tallyho house, and as he was about to make his presence known to the maid of all work, a sound evidently proceeding from the barn attracted his attention. He paused to listen and thought first that the sound was the creak of a barn door on its rusty hinges; now it sounded like the remonstrance of a stuck pig—a last appeal to inhuman man who wanted to eat him; and now the sound broadened into a bellow like that made by a cow with an apple in her throat. Approaching nearer, much interested, Plym discovered that the sound proceeded from a human source (temporarily inhuman, perhaps), and at last he heard the voice of young Tallyho in expostulation, crying at intervals, "Don't, don't! I won't do it again! It hurts! Oh!" Then came the sound of blows—thwack—whack.

Plym chuckled and enjoyed for a moment a feeling of

exultation, but that passed quickly when contingent facts began to crowd into his mind. Young Tallyho had placed his gyrating fingers in disgraceful and insulting juxtaposition to his nose on several occasions when Plym was at a safe distance, and Plym had promptly posted the account from the journal to the ledger of his mind and was waiting for favorable opportunity to strike a balance; like every other bookkeeper, Plym desired to have accounts closed and squared sharp and quick.

But in the present case, Plym laid aside his personal account against Young Tallyho. Who was strapping Harold Tallyho? His mother was at the Dorcas, his father was in the city and would not return till the last train, and the maid, who would not dare to take such liberty, anyway, he had seen through the window in the kitchen. Who, then, dared to trounce and belabor this soft and pulpy offspring in his parents' absence? Plym's sympathy was always with the man or boy underneath. If his enemy, if he had one, was getting the worst of a set to, and the treatment was unfair, Plym interfered not particularly to help the weaker but to give the stronger a lesson and to see fair play.

Twilight was yielding to night as Plym crept into the barn and into the stable. At one end were the participants in the strapping game. The darkness was deeper than outside, but Plym could see that Young Tallyho was lying across a carpenter's wooden horse, face down, and a big man in a straw hat and overalls was applying a tug to that part of the boy's body on which his mother's slipper earlier in life (if she did her duty) might have played a lively tattoo. A tug, often called a trace, is the stoutest part of a harness; tug or trace, trace is a good name for it, for nothing leaves quicker more lasting traces of castigation.

Plym's muscles began to knot and to twitch. 'Twas not painful to hear Young Tallyho's remonstrance or the sound of the tug making traces, for he felt that the culprit deserved all that was now thrust upon him and that it was good medicine for him; and if the striking scene held a while longer, Harold Tallyho would miss the Dorcas and his aunt's raspberry jammed tart cake, made expressly for his benefit—unless, forsooth, he stood up all the time, or was swung in a hammock to eat his supper.

But who was using the tug upon the tender person of Harold Tallyho? Si Brinley, of course. Brinley was a great hulk of a fellow who "did chores" for Tallyho—milked his cow and fed and curried his horse when exchange of pulpits (often now, for Tallyho, evidently, was near the bottom of his or some other man's barrel of sermons) and other business took him from home. And, now, this Brinley, this major domo of the cow stable and the pig pen, not content with mixing swill, currying the horse and polishing the harness, had assumed the role of moral teacher and sturdy flagelator with a tug—a serviceable but plebeian instrument—of the sacred (to his mother) person of Harold Tallyho, whose skin and flesh was pink and tender, curling under the tug like the sensitive plant before unwelcome breath.

Further, Plym had an account of long standing to settle with Si Brinley; not of great amount or importance—not enough to be a solitary casus belli, but sufficient to animate and to give zest to the settlement of more weighty matters. Plym heard occasionally the low, hoarse grunt of Brinley as the tug descended and left still more traces. All this passed through Plym's mind like a gleam as he crept along the stanchions in the stable. He could quiet his feelings and his knotting muscles no longer; not because the tug was scoring, but

because Si Brinley dared to thrash his aunt's pastor's boy.

As Brinley paused to take breath and Young Tallyho lifted up his voice like a six foot fog horn in hoarse weather, Plym charged upon Brinley, snatched the tug, rolled Young Tallyho off the wooden horse onto the floor and laid Brinley in his place and applied the tug to the part uppermost—where kind Nature might need to apply her healing balm before he could sit at table in comfort. Brinley objected strongly and protested in his gruff voice (a cold in the head was Brinley's constant companion), but the tug fell with the regularity of a steam trip hammer or the flail of the professional thresher of grain.

Plym had not spoken a word, for he had such a small opinion of Young Tallyho that it hurt his feelings to appear as his advocate; and if he could properly deal out to Brinley what he deserved and retire unrecognized, so much the better; he could square account then with Young Tallyho as though nothing had happened; no "softness of feeling" could come between to mitigate punishment for Young Tallyho's gyrating four finger offence. Brinley, however, managed to wriggle off the wooden horse and shouted, "Help! murder! sheriff!"

"Great Hemlock an' Whistlin' Pine!" thought Plym. Although hoarse as the leader of the summer band in Ragweed Swamp, that was the voice of Tallyho. Plym had been tugging the pastor. Well, that was like that shiftless Brinley—never to be depended upon to be where he was expected to be; for his failure to be where he was looked for in the present case, a double dose would be his portion when the time of reckoning came. Like the wind running down Leaning Tower Hill, Plym left the stable; perhaps his turkey red necktie flamed forth in the dark-

ness; he tore it off and placed it in his pocket. Keeping to the turf side of the path, he ran into the street and rejoiced that Sandy had disappeared; he found him in front of the post office, and drove back to the parsonage.

As he went up to the side door leisurely and whistling, he met Tallyho (tugged) and his (tugged) boy as they came from the barn.

Plym's stutter was now usually in the background, but oppressed by sense of guilt, his words came by piecemeal and limped sadly. "Goo-good e-ev'nin', Mi-sis-sister Tal-Tallyho, Mi-Mi-Mis' Tallyho s-sent m-me ter gi-git er lo-loaf er ca-cake s-she fer-fergot t-ter t-take er long."

Tallyho offered no reply, and strode by him rudely as he had, ever since the fight with the ants, and entered the house, followed by Young Tallyho, whimpering and holding his hands to the seat of his trousers. Tallyho spoke to the maid, and the cake in a bandbox, to keep the angel from flying off till the proper time, was placed in Plym's hands. Tallyho informed Plym for the benefit of Mrs. Tallyho that neither he nor Harold would attend the Dorcas.

Plym, mindful of the haughty, almost insolent manner of Tallyho on this occasion and of the insults and snubs received since the rescue from ant vengeance, could not resist the temptation to throw in a last word and to give his tongue a loose rein.

"Mi-sis-sis-ter Tal-Tallyho, ye'd bet-better go t-ter t-ther Dor-Dorcas! Thar's e-esy cush-cushions in p-plenty, an' ni-nice soft pl-places ter se-set in f-fer ye'n Har-Harold!"

The next day, however, the tables were turned. Si Brinley was arrested on the complaint of Tallyho for assault and battery. He must be the man; he was in the

barn a short time before the correction of Young Tallyho began and no one else was present or near. Brinley declared his innocence, but could not prove it. Only one course remained for Plym. Before the trial justice, Plym told the story, freed Brinley, and was allowed to depart himself on the payment of a fine added to an admonition. When Ourtown heard and understood the story, it sat down again, held its sides and laughed. During several weeks, Plym was shy of Ourtown's broadway—the village street—because his appearance set the people in a roar and drew unwelcome attention to himself.

The fact was made known later that Tallyho, apparently so gentle minded and philanthropic in public, had been a persistent flogger of his son who was not bright enough to do enough even in mischief, to deserve such stringent discipline; and he flogged in the dark for the reason, perhaps, that his hand might not be stayed by the "pitying of the eye" till the mind or the brutal instinct in it was satisfied.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A MISSIONARY'S HOME ACRE.

On reaching the city after their long ride from the Carley Farm, where Plym outwitted Constable Budd and released the carriage, Bruce and Paige found an accumulation of duties that demanded immediate discharge. Paige was delegated to report a meeting in Bodley Square, called to bid good bye to a missionary and his wife about to depart for a foreign field. As the meeting was to be held not far from the house of Mr. Geld, Paige on his way to it, called to explain the non-appearance of the man rescued from the Carley Mansion who was to be entertained by Mr. Geld.

Primus admitted Paige with a grunt of weariness and perplexity and his tongue, as usual, was unhinged and running counter to things in general. "Where's the man you were to bring here in the sleepy morning hours? Pinch me with the tongs if I've had a wink of sleep except with one eye since early after midnight! What's the matter? Why all this one-eyed blinking through the best time to pack away sleep? Why didn't you come?"

"Couldn't! Plan changed! Accident to carriage! Is Mr. Geld in?"

"Not much! He's got a job on his hands to-day that makes him jump whenever he turns it over in his mind. If he asked my advice—which he never does—he doesn't know what a mass of wisdom he's letting go to waste—I'd tell him to wash his hands of it, and take a running jump out of it—"

"Where is he?"

"He's over in Bodley Square at a little church there where a foreign missionary is going to bid good bye in a formal way to his friends, before he sails away for the South Sea Islands or some other pagan place to convert the heathen. Quite a time it'll be, I reckon! Speeches by some of the big guns and a general good bye shake all around! I expect Hammat Geld'll put in his oar and do some splashing! I'd give all my old boots to hear him, for I believe from the few gentle words he let slip accidentally, such as "shirk," "shiftless man," and so forth, that he don't take a deal of stock in this man who's going to do so much missionarying among the heathen, and who at this moment, perhaps, is getting teary in his good byeing.

"It's my opinion, knowing Hammat Geld these many years, that if his dander gets up to the proper pitch, he'll stand on this man with both feet. If I didn't have to stay here to turn back the host of ill smelling invaders, I'd go round to Bodley Square to see the fun, for I know about when to expect a blow up—about when Hammat Geld gets so full in his mind of wholesome wrath that something'll give away and let it run up against anything and anybody that happens to be in the way. I'd give a dollar to be there—"

"I'll go to Bodley Square," said Paige.

About two hundred persons were present in the vestry of the little church to bid good bye to the Rev. Erlwin Rockspurr and his wife, who, the leader in the service was saying, as Paige entered, were going to a foreign field to win souls from darkness to light. Rockspurr was a charity boy, youth and man. He had never earned a dollar till he began to preach, and it may be questioned if he gave any equivalent for the dollar then. In the

preparatory school, in the academy, in college, in the theological seminary, charity was kind in view of the great good to come, and opened her purse to him with great liberality. When he left college at the foot of his class (aye, at the very heel of it) friends labored with him as they might with a drowning man, to the end that he turn his talents (as yet hid from view) to something other than theology.

In vain they struggled with him gently and kindly, praising his virtues (fools are always virtuous) and pointing out probable life of greater usefulness in some calling outside of the pulpit; for it was evident to any mind propped up even sparingly with intelligence, that Rockspurr might fly and perch on the fleecy clouds as easily as he could preach. But opposition begets determination; many a man might not dare to do or attempt to do if not persuaded not to do; the eloquent appeals of friends and their many plain words served only to add fuel to Rockspurr's ambition, and the theological seminary was responsible for sending another blockhead into the world to attempt to keep weary and innocent people awake on Sundays.

Without a dollar or the prospect of one opening up anywhere, Rockspurr married; although his wife was penniless, yet she was endowed with much good sense of the common kind (probably eclipsed or in the shadow of love at the time of marriage) a will of some magnitude and inflexibility, and a constitution of mind and body that could give adversity and strong legged poverty blow for blow and still cling to original purpose. Rockspurr had been a pulpit candidate from heel to toe of the land; but as he was honest and preached his own sermons when showing his paces, he had never received a call or an

invitation to fill the pulpit a second time; and the cause has been set forth.

Rockspurr was attached to a publication office where a religious magazine of the denomination saw the light, and was sent forth, according to statement in bold type, for the express purpose to save souls, and incidentally, of course, to line the pockets of the publishers. Thus Rockspurr's acquaintance in his denomination was large, and in summer when pastors put aside their cares with their winter clothing (wishing, perhaps, that the moths would nibble at the cares and let alone the clothing, for clothing will not come unless money bid for it, while cares come in and draw up to the board without an invitation) and retired to the mountains or to the coast to rest, Rockspurr was called into line to preach once in a place (that was all the church could stagger under in a twelvemonth and live) during the absence of the pastor.

When Pastor Chumm discovered that his congregation was making sharp, if not unfriendly, criticism behind his back, he exclaimed to Mrs. Chumm, "I'll get Rockspurr to preach during my vacation if possible. That'll teach them that there is something a little worse than Chumm!" And Rockspurr came and thumped the pulpit twice a day for three Sundays—first time on record that he had preached twice in the same place—but at the close of the third Sunday, Nature could not abide longer and hold up her head. The church was closed; the congregation voted Chumm a second Spurgeon and increase of salary and sent word to add another week to his vacation; the latter gift was a little ambiguous, but Chumm accepted it as a compliment.

It may be inferred from many examples that pastors are not likely to introduce into their pulpits preachers with more fame than they command themselves; a noted

preacher might go a begging (and never get it) for an invitation to many pulpits; the regular dispensers fear the reaction; the child of poverty, visiting the table of the rich, dreads the return to black bread and bean porridge. Therefore, Rockspurr was of some use in the religious world. Whenever he preached, the congregation rose up as one mind and thanked the Lord devoutly for sending it such an eloquent preacher (a dull stick though he might be)—their own pastor—and no more grumbling was heard so long as the weary drooning of Rockspurr was held in memory.

To give an idea of Rockspurr's preaching, is out of the range of the ordinary historian; his English was limp and shiftless like Rockspurr himself; evident was it that a man like Rockspurr would never cross his t's or dot his i's any more than he could put a cap on the big "I" of Rockspurr without the help of others; a grammar school boy who presented an essay as ragged and torn (grammatically) as Rockspurr's sermons, would alarm his parents and their thoughts might be directed to institutions for the feeble minded that they might select the best and have it ready when necessary.

But Rockspurr had a voice if his stock of other things was scant; the sound of it set the teeth on edge, for it was like that made by a broad, flat file in the hands of a lazy man; the rasping of its jagged edge—the file voice—sawed the mind ajar in spite of itself and held it open to receive outlawed platitudes and weakling offsprings projected by Rockspurr. But enough, Rockspurr is now on the way, at the good bye point, to a heathen vineyard, where the harmony of civilization is discord to the savage ear, and where the rasping of a file may be sweet music and where at last the preaching of Rockspurr may be to his hearers the voice of the nightingale.

Six children had been born to Rockspurr; between the tub, the sad iron, and the goose of the mantua maker, Mrs. Rockspurr, invincible and inflexible as iron, kept the children together in cleanliness and decency and Rockspurr himself in spotless linen. The six children sat on a front bench under the pulpit; among them was a girl nine or ten years of age having a crooked spine, but the face of an angel; she understood what the meeting meant, and with her head on the shoulder of an older sister sobbed and moaned; and all the children understood what was in store for them, for they were to be left behind, and the spell of desolation and despair was upon them; in separate homes, they were to find lodgment and their home whatever it was, was to be blotted out, and father and mother would leave them to pry into the mind of the savage while their own offspring groped alone in the way marked out for them by charity.

Rockspurr sits complacently on the platform with his long white hands folded across his capacious stomach. Apparently, he has reached the summit of his ambition; all worldly cares are below him now—cast off and thrown aside, and he is eager to stride into the Lord's vineyard in the jungle of the savage. Mrs. Rockspurr sits beside him, but she is of different mould and fibre; she is not at ease; anyone can see it; her face is flushed; her eyes are sharp and on her children; now, her face softens and the tears run; it is as plain as a sign in large print that a contrary and protesting spirit is within, as all may see before the last good bye is said.

The Rev. Lacroix Tallyho makes a characteristic speech in ponderous periods and six legged words—the same beating on the big drum; he makes much of the loyalty and sacrifice of the two faithful Rockspurrs, the man and the wife who will gladly leave all for the rescue

of the perishing in the far away heathen stronghold. A layman follows in the same key and sings the same song; another clergyman joins in and sings a chorus to both Tallyho and the layman. And now the chairman calls upon Mr. Hammat Geld. He is sitting on the platform and also, apparently, on pins; he tugs at his neck cloth as though his breathing was not free, crosses his short legs often and fidgets; and it is not stage fright that makes him so uneasy. He is known far and wide as an orthodox chieftain, constant in season and out of season, methodical, mathematical as to habits of mind and logic; and fearless.

Mr. Geld spoke briefly as was his habit but to the point, emphatic yet kind, and it was brief because Mrs. Rockspurr interrupted him. He referred to his interest in foreign missions and in all missions and to the fact that he had endeavored in thirty-five years of active service in the church to aid all missions which he had been associated with to the extent of his mind and purse; this he brought forth, not to laud himself, but to show that his heart had been in the work and was bound to it now. He then went on to say in a few words that in his opinion the field of labor of this man and this woman —this father and this mother—was with their children, that the Lord did not call for any sacrifice like this; and, further, it was his opinion that to leave these children in the way proposed, was an offence to both God and to man.

As soon as Mrs. Rockspurr saw the drift of Mr. Geld's remarks, a great flood of light came into her soul and illumed her countenance. She sprang to her feet, her face flushed and her eyes flashing joyfully, and interrupting Mr. Geld, exclaimed, "He is right! Every word he has said has been in my heart! But I was afraid to

speak lest it might appear that I lacked faith—that I was not in sympathy with the cause! I cannot—I will not leave my children!"

Her voice broke into a sob, the tears flowed in a torrent, and she rushed down to her children and clasped the deformed girl in her arms. Tallyho, with disgust that he had wasted so much good powder on nothing, snatched his overcoat and fled. But the mothers and the fathers in the audience crowded around the resolute woman. And the six children who had heard the mother say that she would not leave them, sent up a shout of triumph; their tears ceased to flow and they were happy again. Rockspurr was dazed but put out a brave face and appeared to acquiesce in the general verdict. Poor man! There was work for him at home. Mr. Geld shook hands with Mrs. Rockspurr, and when she withdrew her hand, Paige saw a roll of bills in her palm. Thus ended the good bye meeting.

Paige walked home with Mr. Geld and received instructions to bring the man now at the Mottle Farm to his house as soon as he was able to travel to the city.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A CLOUD AND AN "IF" BLOWN AWAY.

Everything comes to an end—fast if not welcome, slow if invited. Even this story, although loitering to see Budd budded, Tallyho tugged and Rockspurr (also tugged) thrust back into the domestic harness, galling (to his mind) though it might be, yet the goal marked "Finis" appears not far away as the crow flies; but alluring bypaths may lead astray again so prone is everything dependent on human action to shun the straight (not always narrow) path.

According to the wisdom of the sententious, the patient waiter is not a loser. Bruce had waited, perhaps patiently; if he had lost nothing, there was no evidence that he had made any headway, at least, none of which he and Miss Canton were both cognizant. Bruce saw in the future, very near, perhaps, something taking shape—indeed it began to expand and to round out in Ourtown when he and Paige and Wainworth loitered a field—and leading gradually, it was hoped, to a possibility—Ah! something that thrilled him and held him captive in mere contemplation; but imagination might lead astray especially when it points to delightful disentanglement and happy conclusion.

Since the day of joyful remembrance when Bruce and Miss Canton enjoyed the delightful ride in the suburbs of the city, they had met only twice—a brief exchange of greeting in the public library, when the heart must find expression through the eyes, and once in the park,

where they strolled up and down aimlessly, with speech equally indefinite. In neither place, need it be said, did they meet by appointment, but Bruce as usual frank and blunt declared that he went to the library for no other purpose than to meet Miss Canton if he might be so favored, and that he came into the park at the time when he met her there before in the hope of being equally fortunate; and Miss Canton, her blue eyes full on his and the color of the rose deepening in her cheeks, with equal frankness acknowledged the pleasure that came to her.

But since the meeting in the park, when Bruce left Miss Canton at the Lullywick porch, although he loitered in the park, now a chilling, barren place, and waited in the public library as often as release from duty would permit, yet no glimpse of his ideal rewarded him. He began to think that the terrible woman with the eyes or the woman with the terrible eyes or the terrible woman with the terrible eyes, had shut in Miss Canton behind lock and bar in some part of the Lullywick dungeon and passed food to her on a long handled skillet through the transom. She—the woman with the eyes—was capable of such treachery and of any high handed interference that helped to win.

Paige laughed at his friend and his dilemma and advised him to "pluck up courage" and face Madame Lullywick—walk into the Lullywick castle like a knight of old and carry off Miss Canton, figuratively if not literally, and quoted the often repeated reference to the faint heart that never won fair lady or anything else, fair or unfair. Bruce, however, had not a faint heart—not a flabby fibre in it—but he must have consideration for Miss Canton; a rash move might compromise her. Paige might laugh—he had something to laugh at—no wonder

that he became merry and whistled contentedly from morning till night.

For Paige was a regular, or irregular, visitor at Elm Cottage—taking advantage of every gap in reportorial work. In Mary Latwell's company he attended church (when the "Open Eye" was willing) and apparently found pleasure by her side in lectures and concerts, or in reading to her and Mrs. Latwell in the cosy sitting room at Elm Cottage. To Paige, the way was growing broader at every step, and with every day's advance, the roadside flowers became brighter. To Bruce, however, long shadows were making out toward him—one in particular, that cast by the tall, imperious form of Madame Lullywick. He grew "desperate;" something must be done and speedily; and while he sat at his desk in the office of the "Morning Waker" racking his brain for a clue to immediate action, a messenger boy brought him a note. It was from Mr. Apton inviting him to dine with him and Mrs. Apton and a friend that evening.

Bruce hesitated, for he was in no mood for the conventionalities of a dinner party, but Mr. Apton was a valued friend, acquainted with his father, and he sent his acceptance. When he reached the Apton house, he found Mr. and Mrs. Apton sitting alone, and, at length inquired:

"Who's the friend I'm to meet? I suppose he has not yet arrived."

Mrs. Apton laughed and left the room, returning with Agnes Canton. "This is the friend we wished you to meet," said Mrs. Apton, as she led Agnes forward. Bruce took both her hands in his and held them, and Agnes made no attempt to free them. Now was plain sailing—outside the bar with the open sea before them. New life came to Agnes and to Bruce; hardly a day

passed without meeting; neither attempted to conceal from the other what one wished the other to know; the ship of love had weighed anchor and the captain and his mate in full accord, shaping their course carefully were ready to contend with any storms and breakers that might come. Ha! Bruce could whistle now as loud as Paige. The night of the "reunion" at Mr. Apton's, Paige was at his desk in his lodging house as Bruce came in. One look was enough. He sprang up and seized him by both hands.

"I knew it would come! I knew you'd find a way out of the dumps! No more mooning and moping and quarreling with your meals! But a live man and a Bruce with a future before him!" And they smoked three pipes and went to bed.

Mrs. Apton was an old friend of Mrs. Latwell's, and in the latter's escape from the Lullywick barn, or from the clutches of Lullywick's agent, no one was more eager to help than Mrs. Apton. Mary Latwell's school had prospered beyond all expectation. The time had come to decline to receive more pupils or to secure an assistant. This was the opportunity Mrs. Apton had been waiting for. About a week after leaving the Lullywick house, Agnes Canton became an inmate of Elm Cottage and an assistant in the school. Mrs. Apton was loth to part with Agnes so soon, but she respected her in her determination to be self supporting.

When Agnes ran out of the Lullywick house, she wore neither hat nor cloak. To the credit of Madame Lullywick it must be said that on the following morning, a servant appeared bringing Agnes' little collection of books and everything that had belonged to her in that house. Bruce and Paige now whistling in concert, turned their steps often in the same direction—to Elm

Cottage. Mrs. Apton lived only a mile away, and often Bruce and Agnes, and later, Paige and Mary sat at the board and admired the genial host and his wife—Mr. and Mrs. Apton.

The massing of events now demands return to the guest at the Mottle Farm, and the weaving in of a bright colored thread in this fabric—a thread that leads back to Elm Cottage again. A few days after the invasion of the Carley Mansion by Captain Bonny and his followers, the guest at the Mottle Farm escorted by Bruce, Paige, Wainworth and Plym, left Ourtown and the hospitable Mottle Farm house, and went to the city and to the house of Hammat Geld. Primus was in doubt at first about admitting such a "procession," as he called it, but the moment he saw Bruce and Paige, the severity of his countenance relaxed, the door went wide and he bowed low. Mr. Geld received his guest with bustling hospitality of the old fashioned, hearty kind. By both hands he greeted the man rescued from the Carleys and looked at him intently.

"Why, I know you! Is not your name —— ——? My lieutenants, here, as I like to call Mr. Paige and Mr. Bruce, wouldn't tell me your name. Said I must see you first! Why, sir, this is a surprise! Were you not a delegate in 18— to a convention or conference of charitable societies in this city?"

"Yes, sir. And now I remember that I was on a committee with you. Was it not so?"

"And do you remember who was president of that conference?"

"I do, Mr. Latwell, and I had the pleasure of entertaining him in my own house in Oldport. Yes, yes! A noble man! I hope I may see him again—"

"Not in this life, sir," said Mr. Geld with great tender-

ness. "But his family lives and you shall know more of the members of it. But there's the dinner bell! After your long ride you must need refreshment."

Plym, although convinced that he was, or had been, of some use in the world and able to satisfy his mind on that point when he was alone with Stump, yet when he came into a company like the one in which he now found himself, he lost all faith in the opinion of Plympton Hanker, that he, the aforesaid Plympton Hanker, had deceived him, caused him to be puffed up and the best thing he could do with him now was to take him by the collar (not gently, but with a firm shaking grip) and lead him straight home, where he could get on very well with only his uncle and aunt and Stump and Rebecca to look on. But Mr. Geld who knew the details of Plym's part in the rescue, expressed his admiration so warmly, that Plym was forced to admit that he had been a little too severe in condemning that Plympton Hanker for filling his mind with lofty thoughts, and decided to let him off with a reprimand and a caution not to present stilts again or suggest them till he knew how to wear them. But awkward and bashful at first, around the table, where all were his friends, reserve yielded to confidence and easy manners, and he was a man among men; even the stutter was driven into retirement and dared not show itself often.

After Mr. Geld's guest had visited Oldport as he intended to do immediately, in company with Mr. Geld and Bruce, the history of his life was to be told to all interested. After dinner while not trenching on the story of his life that was to come later for the benefit of all, yet he was led to speak of his wife, long in her grave, and of her virtues and accomplishments, one of which was the art of singing. Recollection prompted the mention

of her voice as one of peculiar quality—a rich contralto —once heard, never forgotten by those who knew the singer. In the course of this reminiscence, the guest produced a worn bible from his pocket and from the leaves a photograph of his wife and their daughter standing at her side. It was stained and discolored, but the features stood out boldly. He passed the photograph to Mr. Geld and Mr. Geld handed it to Paige.

Bruce was looking over Paige's shoulder as he took the photograph. He did not dare to raise his eyes, but when the guest turned to Mr. Geld in conversation, Paige arose, saw the strange look in Bruce's face, and together, still holding the photograph, went into the next room on the plea of getting a better light. Then they looked at the picture and then at each other. Bruce's face flushed hot and his teeth were set as though biting a nail. Greatly moved and shaken, he muttered under his breath:

"O, the villainy yet to come to light! We are only on the surface now! But hurry back with the picture, Paige! I don't dare to look at him or let him see my face! He may suspect something!"

Bruce, Paige, Wainworth and Plym departed, Wainworth to return to Ourtown, but Plym was to be the guest of Bruce and Paige for several days. In the afternoon, however, Bruce was so impressed with the discovery that came with the exhibition of the photograph, or rather with the proof of what Bruce believed that he had already discovered, that he could not rest patiently till the proof, if it were proof, were tested. Accordingly, Paige snatched time between tasks to call again at Mr. Geld's house to make known to him the probable discovery made by Bruce—a discovery made or begun in Ourtown and almost proved by the photograph.

Mr. Geld gasped when he heard Paige's account and the items of probable proof; he was startled as any one might be, for if what was suspected was true, it added greater infamy to those already involved. His eyes shone with unwonted brilliancy as he strode up and down while Paige talked. He acquiesced in what Paige suggested and said that the test should be made that very evening.

In the evening, Bruce, Paige and Plym called early at the Elm Cottage to announce the coming of Mr. Geld and his guest, and to prepare Mrs. Latwell for the part assigned to her. When Mr. Geld and his friend arrived, Mrs. Latwell received the stranger, first with a look of surprise and eager questioning that gave way to one of happy assurance. In the little parlor Mr. Geld and the stranger, soon to be introduced, and Bruce, Paige and Plym were sitting, while in the next room, Mary Latwell and Agnes Canton were interested in their music.

"We heard the music as we came to the door," said Mr. Geld; "tell the young ladies not to stop! Sounds good! Won't Miss Canton sing something? That old song she sang the last time I called—what was it?—no matter—anything!"

Agnes Canton began to sing; the voice, a low contralto, was not a cultivated one, but smooth and melodious and had peculiar intonation and swing that had attracted every one who had heard it. Every one in the parlor, except Plym, perhaps, was watching or giving heed to the guest who came with Mr. Geld. Immediately, he was intently interested; he drew his hand across his eyes, and leaned forward, looking absently at the floor. He was sitting by Mr. Geld's side; and now he turned and asked eagerly, placing his hand on Mr. Geld's arm:

"Who sings like that? Whose voice is that?" and

without waiting for reply, for he appeared to be in a revery, he held his hand to his head, mused apparently in soliloquy, "O, it's so much like her voice—so much like it!" He was standing now and Mr. Geld was on his feet for the man trembled and shook; his face paled and showed that he was deeply moved by emotions that stirred him; the voice had penetrated and opened the fount of recollection and sad memory. Placing his hand on Mr. Geld's shoulder, he asked in a tremulous voice, "Can I see the singer?" Now, the real test was coming. Bruce leaned against the door and shaded his eyes with his arm; everyone in the room stood up; they could not keep their seats.

When Agnes came into the room and looked full into the kind face before her, she stopped; the roll of music she held in her hand fell to the floor; an indescribable expression spread over her face; her lips parted; her eyes grew moist and her breast heaved. And why? Could she see in the face turned so earnestly, almost piteously, to her, her own features or rather features that resembled her own so nearly that a casual glance would suggest near relationship—the high, broad forehead, the arch of the eyebrows, the round, full blue eye, the nose and nostril—stronger in one face than the other, but the similarity striking and indisputable.

Meanwhile, the man looked with protruding eyes, but only a moment; he drew his hand across his eyes like one in a quandary; then he advanced slowly, speaking in almost a whisper as if in soliloquy, "Merciful God! Deal gently! Lead me not astray! It must be! It is!" Agitated and quivering like a reed, his voice hoarse and tremulous, he exclaimed, coming nearer, "You are my daughter! My long lost Hope! Hope Boye is your name!" "I know it—I felt it the moment I saw you!"

cried Hope as she may now be called, as she sprang into his arms and he held her while the tears came to his relief and flowed in a torrent. Again and again he pressed her to his breast and again he held her from him to feast his eyes on what he never expected to see again.

Calmer now, sitting side by side, their arms around each other, he said, "It is fifteen years since you were torn from me. I remember the day as though it were yesterday. You wore a blue—"

"Wait a moment! Wait a moment!" cried Hope, springing up, and she ran from the room and returned with the blue dress and the blue trimmed hat.

"The very dress!" cried the father, "and the hat you wore that day! and that," he exclaimed excitedly, as Hope held up to him the card found in the waist of the dress, "that has your father's name written upon it—Tristam Boye—written by my own hand!"

The scene throughout was thrilling, indescribable; the imagination must picture it and may not exaggerate. Not often may one look upon anything so emotional—upon anything that could stir the soul more, aye, or so lift it out of its dross and littleness and refine it.

Mr. Boye produced the photograph shown at Mr. Geld's house—the photograph of Hope's mother and of Hope herself. The child Hope was the woman Hope in miniature. No wonder that Bruce accepted this picture or what it made known, as additional proof of what his mind had seized upon. And how eagerly and with what emotion did Hope gaze through her tears at this counterfeit of a loving face—the face of the one who gave her birth, and how her heart exulted in this dispelling of the dark mystery that hung over her and threw its shadow everywhere around her! Like a plant brought

from the darkened pit and placed in the sun, Hope sprang forth at the first touch of this discovery into newness of life, of happiness, of loveliness.

Mr. Geld and Mr. Boye departed late in the evening, Hope clinging to him till the last moment, covering his face with kisses and smoothing his hair. Paige and Mary Latwell were in the hall, Plym was in the parlor waiting for his friends to say good bye. In the sitting room, Bruce drew Hope up to him and said:

"You said, 'Yes' with an 'if,' because a cloud hid early history. The cloud is blown away. May not the 'if' follow?" "Yes!" replied Hope earnestly. Their lips met, and for a moment, folded in each others arms, they held fast to what was dearest in life to both.

When Bruce and Paige left Elm Cottage, and returned to labor for their respective papers, for, although nearly midnight, yet the "Open Eye" and the "Morning Waker" demanded attendance till press time in the morning, they spoke of the task before them or somebody—the task of telling the daughter the father's history, and the father the daughter's history. During the first meeting, not a word had been said in relation to past history—enough for the moment that they were united—that they were to be father and daughter, and henceforth live for each other.

Once during the evening, Hope said, incidentally, "When I was with Madame Lullywick—" Her father turned to her with a start, almost fiercely, and leaned forward and looked at her intently as though he would speak; all present, except Hope, perhaps, noticed that he was agitated. Before he knew that his daughter lived, the loss of his child (as he afterward said) was connected in his mind with the same agency that had deprived him of his liberty; but the remark of Hope

as to her presence in the Lullywick house, was the first intimation that his suspicion was well founded.

The moment the door of Elm Cottage closed upon them, Mr. Boye, grasping Mr. Geld's arm, held him, compelled him to stop, and in the light of a street lamp, interrogated him.

"Do you know my daughter's history? She spoke of being with Madame Lullywick! Is it possible that—"

"I know her history," said Mr. Geld. "Let us return home and I will give you all details."

Mr. Boye loosed his hold and the two walked home to Mr. Geld's house in silence. Although expecting, perhaps, a disclosure of the same import, from what he had heard during the evening, yet he appeared unnerved, almost stunned when he knew all; the realization was more bitter than the expectation, and he sat silent and pale contending with himself and contemplating this example of extraordinary villainy or madness. The next day, accompanied by Mr. Geld, Mr. Boyle went to Elm Cottage and heard the story from his daughter's lips, and recounted what had befallen him at the same hands. It was an ordeal for both. Hope Boye, when she saw and understood all this treachery, and realized its relation to her father and herself, like her father, at the first stroke, she was speechless with feelings of unutterable horror. She held her head between her hands and stared blankly before her like one distraught. Her father drew her to his breast and soothed her.

"My daughter, you have a happy life before you, and of what remains to me, may bring happiness, if we strive for it—if we turn our thoughts to the future and let the past, fast as it may, recede; we can never forget what we have suffered, the influence of it will never leave us; but our duty now is to our friends and to our-

selves—to quell the spirit that rises naturally within and to turn our thoughts resolutely away to what is before us. If we sit down to mourn and to dwell upon this great cruelty, it will spoil what remains for us.

"O, there is much to be thankful for—to praise God for, that in spite of all, we have each other; and you, a well chosen companion for life, to whom and to others I owe my new life, and both of us, all these good friends who have done so much for us. Now, let us live, let us keep thoughts of hate and revenge out of our hearts, and make the most of the new life that is now so sweet."

"We will!" exclaimed Hope, buoyantly, smiling through her tears, "we'll live or try to live on the bright side. The past shall be a sealed book to us; we cannot forget what is written in it, but we may put it away on a high shelf and let the dust gather over it."

CHAPTER XXIX.

TRISTAM BOYE.

In a narrow street paved with the round cobbles that cause the rider to be thankful for the invention of springs to ease cerebral cushions—in a dark and apparently neglected thoroughfare that led into the old part of the city, once aristocratic in many brass knockers and much silver plate on the panel—in this by-way, steadily encroached upon by the demands of trade and traffic—in and around a house as broad, solid and short of stature as the owner himself, Hammat Geld, was unusual stir and bustle one morning within a week after Tristam Boye and his daughter Hope clasped hands again over the fearful chasm that had separated them so long.

Hope and Mary Latwell and Mrs. Latwell came early, for although the father and daughter had seen each other daily since the time of reunion, yet there was such delight in this relationship—it gave such happiness to the new life opening to both that every moment that gave companionship was taken advantage of. Hope on one side, leaning on her father's arm, and Mr. Geld on the other, Mr. Boye received the guests as they arrived and their congratulations.

Tristam Boye on this bright morning, the past behind and the future before, throwing wide its door and showing a delightful prospect, was an attractive, stately man on the threshold of the fiftieth year; in stature he was about five feet ten, well proportioned and formed, large limbed and muscular. When first seen fleeing in the

Carley woods, the hair appeared almost white; silver threads were in it, but the light color was the natural color of earlier days. During the captivity, the beard grew long with more white streaks in it. Only a long moustache now remained and it intensified the strength of character in every lineament of the countenance; the head, large with broad, high forehead; the eyes large and deep blue under shaggy eyebrows; the nose, the highest Grecian type; the mouth small and firm with full lips and a chin, prominent and progressive if not aggressive.

Paige, Bruce, Wainworth, Mr. and Mrs. Apton, and Captain Bonny appeared next and were quickly followed by Archelaus and Aseneth Mottle—Archelaus tall, stooping and stiff as if in the clutch of rheumatism owing to the fact that his blue broadcloth was too small or he too large, and Aseneth, rosy and smiling in her new bombazine and conscious of her good deeds in the cause that brought them all together. When Aseneth was presented, Hope Boye threw her arms around her neck, kissed her, and expressed her gratitude for the kindness shown her father till Aseneth was overcome and must retire to a corner and have a little play with a big yellow bandanna and a few contrary tears determined to run and to have their own way.

Then came four sturdy business men from Oldport, Mr. Boye's former home. In company with Mr. Geld and Bruce, during the week after he found his Hope, Mr. Boye had presented himself to old friends. In every case the recognition was immediate and the identification complete; and four of his early friends who had known him from boyhood, voluntarily became his champions, and had come to the city to hear the story of their friend's wrongs and to stand by him in securing his own.

All expected were now present except Plym. Where was Plym? Aseneth was appealed to.

"He's ther queerest boy, ye ermost ever see! I don't know what he was er meanin' tew, but when we jest got inter ther city, Plym says, says he, 'I got er 'n arran' ter dew, an' ye mought's well go straight deown ter Mr. Geld's heouse, an' I'll come's quick's I kin. An' arter gittin' us onter one o' them racin' cars, an' er tellin' ther driver whar ter let us off, he was erway an' outer sight an' hearin' in er minute. I don't know what ter think on't!"

"We must wait for him," said Mr. Boye. "Without Plym, the company is incomplete!"

"Mrs. Mottle," said Bruce, "when I was at your house the last time, you spoke of a peddler who came to stay over night occasionally. Has he been around lately?"

"Lor', thet ol' man in er yaller coat! Wal, I dew hope not! I dew say I couldn't erbide him ergin, noways! Sech stories he telled 'beout snakes an' sech scandalyous things he said 'beout ther Thorney Brook folks ther which no better lives an' whar me'n Sis' Ann ware brought up—"

The door bell rang and after the usual greeting and ceremony on the part of Primus, who was on high heels this day, the thump of cane or crutch of someone ascending the stairway was heard distinctly. This stirred Bruce's recollection; he went into the hall and looked down; his face was a study as he came back and announced that Plym was coming and that someone was with him. Who could this be? No one expected was missing except Plym. Bruce's manner betrayed him and all eyes were on him as the company in silence heard the steady, slow prod of the cane or crutch. When Bruce led in Plym's companion Aseneth almost

screamed as she shouted "Hitty Carley!" The scene that followed was interesting and emotional, for the fact that Hitty Carley had been foully dealt with had been accepted. All gathered around her and exchanged cordial and sympathetic greeting. To Mr. Boye she said:

"When I heard from Plym that you would tell today the story of this great wrong, I begged him to help me to come. I hope I do not intrude. I must tell you, if I may be allowed, that I tried to help you, and in trying, I became as much a prisoner in that house as you. And sometime, let me tell you more about it—free my soul, for although I try to feel guiltless, yet as I look back and review it all, it does seem that I ought to have done more —that I ought to have prevented it. In the proper place, if I may, let me tell my story."

Mr. Boye assured her, as he held her hand, that he held her blameless, and that, moreover, he was indebted to her for the assistance she rendered those who secured his release. Mr. Boye then began the story of his life.

"My name is Tristam Boye. My father was Roger Boye, a wealthy merchant of Oldport. My mother died when I was a child; my father did not marry again. I was an only child and, hence, heir to all my father possessed. The only blood relatives were Fenworth Boye, my father's brother, and his daughter, Isabella Boye, now Mrs. Lullywick. In the settlement of my grandfather's estate, my father and his brother became estranged and for years were like strangers to each other, but near the close of my uncle's life, they were brothers again. I mention this because I must refer to it again. During the estrangement of my father and my uncle, Isabella Boye came to womanhood and I to manhood. We saw little of each other at this time, although Isabella, regardless of her father's displeasure, came oc-

casionally to our house; but I disliked her and so did my father, not on account of the family quarrel, but because as girl, maid, and woman, she was wilful, headstrong and imperious. Even as a child, her fits of passion were painful to see.

"At the age of twenty-one, I became a member of the business house of which my father was the head; he had been a merchant, properly so called, but later in life the accumulation of property led him into the banking business. When I was twenty-six, I married Hope Lester, daughter of a prominent merchant of Oldport, where her sister is now living, and who, when I found her a few days ago, recognized me as I approached the house. She is an invalid or she would be here today.

"In the meantime, Isabella Boye married Alfred Tukins, a wealthy man by inheritance, but weak physically as he was mentally, owing, in part, to his manner of life. This marriage took place in the period of reconcilliation between my father and his brother. I attended the wedding with my father. Love was not a factor in this marriage. Isabella's father and mother tried to prevent it, but they might as well attempt to stop the wind. I have made no mention of Isabella's mother. She was generous, kind-hearted and sympathetic—a strong character, but strength with wisdom, patience and gentleness; Isabella resembled her mother in feature, but in Isabella every lineament, while apparently a counterpart of her mother's, was yet, shall I say, carried a little further—made a little more prominent, a little sharper, and it was said often, in jest, that Isabella was like her mother and 'a great deal more so.'

"At last Fenworth Boye, my uncle, failed in business. My father to save him gave him half of the amount he received from the father's—my grandfather's—estate,

really divided with him again and every dollar of it was lost, or it failed to help my uncle out of his trouble. Then Alfred Tukins, husband of Isabella, who had turned to manufacturing, failed also, and was only an overseer in the mill of which he had been owner. Now came the trying time for Isabella. She had been accustomed to every luxury and now to be reduced to dependence upon the wages of a mill operative, brought out and made prominent the defects in her character. Adversity may mellow some natures, but it hardens others.

"Isabella now attempted to bring my father under the yoke of her command or wish by flattery and forced politeness. But my father dreaded to see her enter the house, although he treated her courteously. When she learned that no money could be drawn from him, that is, when she realized that my father would not help to support her in the way she had been accustomed to live—he was willing to help her in a frugal way, and had already done so—she turned upon him like a person bereft of reason and called him a thief and tried to rake up the old quarrel; and she knew that her father acknowledged that he was wrong, that the division of my grandfather's estate was just; and when she knew also that my father divided again to save her father from ruin—knowing all this, I say, she called him a thief and my father ordered her out of the house and bade her never darken his door again.

"A daughter came to gladden our hearts and we called her Hope, for that was her mother's name. When Hope was about four years of age, her mother died. I pass quickly over this time, for it was the darkest hour of my life; but more sorrow and bereavement was in store for me, and some of it came the next year. Hope, the de-

light of my heart and of her grandfather's, too, often went with me to the office, usually after dinner, staid awhile and then returned home alone, as the distance was not far, and by a side street the way was quiet and free from traffic. One day in that blue dress and that blue trimmed hat which some of you have seen, Hope accompanied me to the office, clinging to my hand, dancing along and prattling in her joyous way. She played around the office an hour or more, sat on her grandfather's knee, for he was never tired of holding her and listening to her childish speech. Then she kissed us both and ran toward home.

"About four o'clock that afternoon, the housekeeper came to the office to enquire for Hope, for she had not returned home. I need not dwell upon what followed immediately. No trace of her could be found—not a clue came from any source. A woman living on the street through which Hope passed on her way home, saw her, she thought, she was not sure, enter a carriage. As she went willingly, this woman thought that some friend had asked her to ride. Supposing that this was a case of child stealing for gain, reward was offered and advertised generally in the leading papers. My father would have parted with the last dollar to see his granddaughter again; detectives were employed, and I forsook my business, and more than a year traveled up and down in search of my child. But not the slightest trace could be found. Oh! the agony of that time! My father felt the loss as much as I. The old house where life had run so smoothly all my days, particularly after marriage, became a gloomy reminder of former happiness after the mother and the daughter had departed.

"This hastened my father's death, and soon after this event, broken in health and spirits, worn down to a

skeleton by the troubles that had come and the continual search for my child, for, although no clue was found, and the search halted at times, yet it was never abandoned. I closed the business in which my father and I had been engaged, and then set out to satisfy an old ambition. From boyhood I had longed to travel in foreign countries, and now was the opportunity—to regain health, if possible, and to see the world. In charge of the property, I left a man named Jacob Carruthers, a man about my age, who had been a clerk in our house for fifteen years. I made my will and left it with Carruthers.

"In case of my death, the property was to be held in trust for my daughter Hope until there was no reasonable doubt of her death; then the property was to be divided, as my father suggested, among charitable and educational institutions. A short time before my father's death, he spoke of Isabella. 'Poor, erring child!' he said. 'Be kind to her whatever happens; I forgive her! If you can help her, let not her treatment of me stand in the way if she is penitent.' The next year after my father's death, as I started to say, I went abroad and traveled widely. With the bankers in London, I deposited all the money I should need—a large sum, for I did not know how long I might wander. Carruthers was to write to me as often as business demanded, in care of my bankers in London; but there was likely to be little need of correspondence, for I had the utmost faith in Carruthers—in his judgment and in his integrity—and the work he had to do for me or for the estate was not difficult—merely to collect rents and attend to repairs.

"I traveled here and there on the continent of Europe and enjoyed it as well as a man could who had lost

what I had lost. Being of Scotch descent and interested in the land of my forefathers, I returned to Scotland after my wandering in Europe, and in Edinburgh I fell ill, I was taken to a hospital and came very near the dividing line between life and death, and several days there was no hope or expectation of my living as I learned afterward. But I lived, and when fully restored, resumed my travels a better man physically than I had been for years. While I had traveled before for pleasure and profit, in health, and enjoyed it, yet there was more pleasure in it now, for the long illness had wrought a great change; the old load of sorrow remained, but I had a better body and a stronger mind to bear it.

"Two years more passed, during which I visited Egypt and the Holy Land. Up to the time of my illness in Scotland, I had heard from Carruthers several times a year, but there was nothing in the letters of much import except that the business went on as usual. As I have said, I trusted Carruthers in everything and believed that he would do for me as well as I might do for myself, at least in the business entrusted to him. Having such faith in him, I became careless about providing for the receipt or the forwarding of his letters to me from the bankers in London. In one year of my travels I did not hear once from Carruthers, but that was my fault; I had neglected to send my address to my bankers. I mention this to show that when the letters did cease, as they did, I did not know it for a long time.

"But after I had explored the Holy Land with a party of tourists, I turned back to Egypt and to Cairo, intending to go up the Nile. I came to Cairo or reached the great hostelry there in the evening and immediately stumbled upon something that turned my face homeward. In the twilight at the hotel, a group of men were

chatting and smoking. Evidently two parties of Americans had met there and members of each were recounting events that interested all. One man was from this city and was giving a summary of events since the departure of his auditors, who were, I inferred, from this city also. Although hearing the conversation, I was not interested and not listening till I heard my name mentioned. I heard the name 'Boye.' Now, I listened intently. The conversation began by reference to a man named Lullywick, concerning whom some uncomplimentary remarks were made. One of the company asked, 'What is he doing now?' and the answer was, 'O, he married sometime ago a rich widow with four children and a pile of money!' 'Who was she?' asked another. 'I don't know her name,' was the answer, 'but she was the only surviving heir of Boye, the Oldport banker. He had a son, but he died while traveling in Europe.' That was where I heard the name 'Boye.'

"You may imagine the effect of this upon me. My first impulse was to rush forward and declare myself, but that were useless. I could not accept the gossip I had overheard as a positive statement of anything that concerned me, yet you will admit that it was suggestive and likely to set my mind to work. I remembered now that I had not heard from Carruthers for a long time—I could not recall the time when the last letter came. But letters might be in London. Since leaving Scotland and starting out on my eastern tour, I had not once sent my address to my bankers. To London then I must proceed with all speed. I might send my address and have letters forwarded, but if no letters were there, I must go to America to satisfy my curiosity, if nothing more.

"I began to feel that something was wrong and the feeling grew upon me as I traveled toward London. I

found no letters with my bankers, and went immediately to Liverpool and engaged passage for home. Arriving in New York, I made the first great mistake. I never judge anyone till I hear all the evidence. If what I had overheard was true, I could not believe—the thought did not enter my mind—that Isabella had come in possession of my father's property by any except honorable means. If I had been reported dead, then she must have what she thought to be sufficient proof of it. But there was the will. Had the will been lost or tampered with? Carruthers not only had the will in his possession, but also knew its provisions and the names of the trustees; he was not a witness because he was mentioned in it and left a fair sum for his service to my father and to me. The will was in the safe which had belonged to us when in business, and had been placed in Carruthers' office—a room in a building belonging to the estate.

"I could not doubt Carruthers, and when I reached New York, I began to doubt myself; had I dreamed? A little gossip had started me homeward; had I really heard it, after all? And what if I had? Might not some story of my cousin's marriage—of her relationship with Roger Boye—have been distorted into what I heard? If she had married wealth, might not some gossiping tongue have spread the report that the wealth came from Roger Boye since he was her uncle? These thoughts crowded upon me as I traveled homeward, and, as I said before, they led me into making a great mistake. Instead of going to Oldport, as I ought to have done, I came to this city and into the house of my cousin, now Mrs. Lullywick, according to the conversation I had heard.

'After my cousin insulted my father, he never saw her again, but I met her occasionally, and, although I could

have little respect for one who had treated my father with such disrespect, yet as she was civil, I gave her civility in return. I thought of all these things when I presented myself at her house; and I thought, also, of what my father said on his death bed—his injunction to deal kindly with her if there should be occasion to have to do with her. My cousin was surprised to see me. That was natural; but more than surprise was shown in her countenance. I saw quick enough that she had changed—and not for the better; the lines had deepened and the hard, set look that I knew so well, had more meaning in it to me.

"I reached her house about four o'clock in the afternoon, and until supper time I sat before her and listened to her aimless talk that included anything except what concerned me and concerned us both; and as I looked at her, I saw, to my disappointment, not Isabella Boye of my youth and early manhood, but instead a hard, calculating woman whose glance made me unquiet. And I thought I could read her thoughts or enough to tell me that my coming was not welcome. So impressed was I with this idea that I arose to take my departure. Her manner changed and she softened a little. You may wonder why I did not come to the point quickly and make enquiries. I have told you. I could not believe that this woman, passionate, wilful as she might be, would be guilty of intentional wrong. She said that I must not go and invited me to stay to dinner and to remain till morning, at least, and then we would consider matters.

"This apparent hospitality or show of it, disarmed me. My purpose to leave abruptly was not strengthened by any fear of her or what she might do; but my old dislike for her came back and I felt uncomfortable in her

presence. Dinner was announced and with it her husband, a tall, silent man for whom I conceived a great dislike before the meal was over. The man disappeared after dinner and I did not see him again. During the evening Isabella appeared more friendly and put aside some of her dark looks or held herself in check. I made another mistake. When I entered the house in the afternoon, I had told her that I had come direct from the steamer in New York and that I had not been to Oldport or seen a single friend or acquaintance in this country except herself. Thus did I help to coil the rope around my own neck.

"Doubtless that fact helped her to decide upon action —it may have been the spur to all. I was travel stained and weary. Isabella expressed her solicitude and suggested early retirement. I was glad to act upon it, and she conducted me to an untidy room, servant's room, I think, on the upper floor. While in the house I had seen only Isabella and her husband—not even a servant except the negro who admitted me. I must have retired as early as eight o'clock and was soon fast asleep. How long I had been sleeping I know not, but I awoke and realized that I was lying on my face with my hands tied behind me, a gag in my mouth and blindfolded. The ruffians dressed me, but did not untie my hands. My coat, they threw over my shoulders, and thus, half dressed, I was led out of the house, by a man holding each arm, into a carriage. We rode all night and a part of the next day and, at last, reached the place now known as the Carley Farm.

"My story is told. When I realized in whose hands I was—when I saw the character of my cousin and undestood the object of this villainy, I resolved to live, to bear it as patiently as possible, and most important of all,

to preserve my sanity. I could not believe—I never thought for a moment—that my imprisonment was to be permanent. I had faith in God, and I had faith in the fact that villains fall out and disagree. One or both of the Carleys had pegged shoes. I knew nothing about shoemaking, but the younger Carley taught me and I worked steadily at the trade of shoemaking. On this I could fasten my mind and keep it from dwelling upon my hard lot.

"I had some knack with tools even as a boy. I learned soon to unlock my shackles and to be free of them when my jailors supposed me to be held securely; but I knew that it was useless to escape or to attempt to until there was help from the outside to make my case good. Strangers seldom appeared, but occasionally a neighbor came into the yard, and I conceived the plan of communicating with someone in some way; I had a note in my pocket ready to throw from my window if anyone came, and the Carleys were not near. The first opportunity came when Plym and Aleck had the scuffle in the hall. When I heard Aleck go down the stairs, I thrust the note under the door, and, as you know, Plym saw it. I did not know then, of course, that he saw it. The rest you know.

"The younger Carley hardly ever spoke harshly except when in liquor, but the older brother was a ruffian, and the man most feared was the man called Shad, Jeremy Shadler, I believe his name is. It was all hard enough to bear, but the taunts and vile language of the man Shad was the hardest to contend with. One fact remains to be explained. One day the Carleys and the man Shadler could not agree as to the distribution or sharing of money, judging by their conversation as they came noisily and angrily to my room. The elder Carley

in a fit of rage threw off the manacles and told me to go, that I was a free man. But that was only a trick to carry his point, whatever it was. They knew that I could not, probably, escape dressed as I was, or, rather, that I could not convince anyone that I was what I represented myself to be. But I ran out into the path leading into the wood where I was seen, as you have been told, by the good friends who at last, with the help of Plym, secured my release.

"During the visit to Oldport with my friends, Mr. Geld and Mr. Bruce, I learned that Carruthers was made administrator of my estate. That gave him opportunity to do whatever he was tempted to do, if he yielded, and it is evident he did yield; and if he gave way to temptation in one way he would in another. If he had what he regarded as proof of my death, or if he accepted what he knew was not proof, then he could be induced by the same means to ignore the fact that Hope Boye was the heir to the property. A friend in Oldport informed me that a certificate of my death in Scotland was received, ostensibly from the proper authorities, and that the authority was supported by a declaration on the part of the American Consul.

"All this was false and forged, but the mystery is, who procured this certificate? I cannot help believing that someone was on my track, sent by somebody interested, ready to seize upon anything to accomplish the purpose; and when I was near death's door in the hospital, someone procured the certificate, or rather invented and forged it. We learned, also, in this visit to Oldport that Carruthers settled the estate immediately and disappeared—went to Mexico, according to report, taking his family with him. Without doubt, Carruthers was tempted by Isabella, not only to turn over the will to her,

but also to put aside any consideration of my daughter's claim; or Isabella may have provided what Carruthers accepted as proof, if paid for it, of Hope's death.

"Time and search may reveal something, and, although I am not actuated by a desire for revenge, yet I am determined that all guilty participators in this crime shall be brought to justice if possible."

"O, father!" exclaimed Hope, springing up and throwing her arms around his neck, "I remember that one day, several years ago, I was locked in my room in the afternoon and not liberated till the next morning. That happened only once while I was there, and there was no reason for it as far as I could see; and she—that woman—gave no explanation of it, although I asked why I had been treated so. That must have been the time you came! O, what cruelty!"

"Some persons claim," said Mr. Boye, "that all criminals are insane, more or less, according to the magnitude of their crimes; and from a charitable, perhaps a logical, or comparative, view of crime, the theory is well taken. In this case, the facts are so unnatural, so abhorrent, does not the thought come that the acts of this woman show a mind not only unbalanced, but also very near in its distortion to that of persons recognized and restrained as lunatics. All the details of the crime are not known to you all. I have kept to my side of the story thus far. Mr. Bruce and Mr. Paige have prepared an account—a history of it from the beginning, and it will appear in the papers with which they are connected tomorrow morning, provided," Mr. Boye added cautiously, "that we find that woman at home this evening, when, as some of you know, we are to call upon her and when she is to be arrested. I am the last man to make a spectacle—to do anything for mere revenge, but

I think it is proper, and so does my friend, Mr. Geld, that we confront this woman—to show her that her villainy has found her out and failed her at last. But you have a right to know all in advance of publication in the papers, and Mr. Paige will give you another chapter."

Paige related that part of the story with which Lullywick was connected—his trade with the Carleys and Shadler. This was obtained from Jack Carley himself and the reader will come to it in the proper place. It is evident that Madame Lullywick believed that Mr. Boye had been removed and thus is explained her savage treatment of Hope Boye, then known as Agnes Canton. After the disappearance of the father, there was nothing to fear according to the mind capable of such plotting. Yet the driving of Agnes Canton from the house, if that was her intention, was a perilous thing to do. Probably Madame Lullywick was not aware of the fact that the daughter bore a remarkable resemblance to the father. It is not impossible that this resemblance might have attracted attention if Agnes ever came in contact with friends of her father.

"As to the story of my release," said Mr. Boye, when Paige concluded, "some have not heard all the particulars. You know what Mr. and Mrs. Mottle, my good friends, have done, but of Plympton Hanker's part, you are not all acquainted."

When Mr. Boye concluded his eulogy of Plym, Hope Boye went right up to Plym and gave him a resounding smack, and held his hands in her own and thanked him, looking at him through her tears. When the identity of the old peddler was made known, Aseneth Mottle, to the uncontrollable merriment of Plym, turned white, then to apoplectic red, and back and forth, for she remembered, probably, that she had said, even at this

meeting, uncomplimentary things about the peddler. She tried to frame an apology—to add a plaster to heal the wound—but the company laughed indulgently and merrily. Bruce shook hands with Aseneth thrice in succession and she was at ease again.

"Now," said Bruce, "let me tell my story known only to Mr. Paige and Wainworth. You have heard that while we, Paige, Wainworth and myself, were rambling in the Carley woods, we saw a man, now known as Mr. Boye, running in a path that led through these woods. Sometime before this, I became acquainted with Agnes Canton. You may imagine from what has happened since, that, at this time, although the acquaintance had been short, I had an impress in mind or memory of her face and features. We saw the man running—trying to escape, the man now known to us as Tristam Boye; we saw him sink down within fifty feet of us, and we saw the Carleys come up and lead him away. Now when he sank to the ground, he turned his face toward the place of our concealment. Then I saw Agnes Canton—in the features of that man, I saw the remarkable likeness that is now apparent to anyone. I might mistake; the image in my mind, ever before me, might mislead me, but I thought not. It came—the idea—discovery—like a shot; I could not shake it off or convince myself that it was an illusion; there was truth in it and I determined to get at the truth; and, therefore, adopted the disguise of the peddler and set forth.

"As I went on and began to cast up the account and to fit in its place every piece of discovery, to add link to link in the terrible chain of facts, the more apparent it became that when the whole was forged, there would be proof of the fact that this remarkable resemblance between the two was that of daughter to father; and

when I saw the photograph of the mother and the child, there was no longer any doubt that Agnes Canton was the daughter of Tristam Boye."

Dinner was announced and Mr. Geld led the way to his old-fashioned dining room lined with old mahogany and quaintly carved furniture and sideboard, and dispensed a lavish hospitality. Primus had been summoned from his post at the front door to act as major domo. He whispered in Paige's ear, "Come down to my cubby before you go; I've got something good to tell you! It's rich! Don't forget!"

CHAPTER XXX.

HITTY CARLEY.

After dinner, the company assembled again in the long sitting room to hear Hitty Carley's story of her escape.

"When you come to the farm," began Hitty, addressing Mr. Boye, "I was told that you were insane, that rich relatives, kind ones, too, wanted to have you kept in a private family instead of going to a hospital. I never believed a word Jack told me about anything, but I knew that Aleck was truthful, some of the time, at least, and if Jack was not present, I thought I could rely on what he said. Aleck told me that you were crazy and that everything was all right. Possibly, Aleck may have thought so in the beginning. But when I tried to see you, to do what I could to make you comfortable, and was prevented, I was suspicious. When that man they called Shad began to come around, I thought there must be something wrong and said so.

"If I'd been smart, I'd kept my suspicions to myself, but I'm no hand at double play or conniving at anything. But I did make believe I was deaf, and, after a while, I was sure something was wrong. And now began my imprisonment; as soon as Jack suspected me, I was locked in my room at night, and the windows were nailed down. I made up my mind to get away, and at last got the nails out of one window after working at it at odd moments for several days when the boys were out of the house. I planned my escape one night at ten o'clock, but in getting out of the window, my dress

caught and I slipped and fell to the ground. I was injured; my hip was, I believe, broken, and I had to call for help.

"The boys came and carried me back to my bed, Jack cursing me and Aleck crying over me. I needed a doctor, and Aleck pleaded for one, but Jack would not listen. And there I laid for nearly four months, and Aleck was my nurse, and he was kind and gentle when Jack was not near and he let cider alone. I got up at last, but my hip grew together out of shape and shortened the leg. I was watched more than ever now. Folks from the village used to come to see me, but after you come, some were told at the door that I was sick, which was true enough after I fell, and I did long so to see somebody—O, I don't know how I lived through it all—and afterward, if folks did get in, Jack staid in the room. You see, he knew I'd tell the first chance I got.

"In all that time, I never saw anybody alone till Aseneth Mottle came. I am afraid I wasn't very sociable, for I was thinking what I ought to do—trying to make up my mind what to tell her. Jack had threatened to kill me a good many times if I 'squealed,' as he called it, and what to do when Aseneth was there, I did not know. If I began to tell her and Jack should come in, it might be to my disadvantage as well as to you, and so between my doubts and fears, I said nothing. But I saw something that gave me encouragement. I saw Plym going around the house, and now that Aseneth and Plym had come, they would come again, perhaps, and I looked for something to happen, and something did happen that very day as you have heard, for that was the day when Plym had the tussle with Aleck in the hall in the ell, and when he found out that somebody was in the ell. I cannot tell you how I felt—how dis-

graced I was that day when that good man, the pastor, was treated so shamefully; but I was powerless to prevent it.

"That day, the day of the pastor's visit, Plym went through the roof. He knew I saw him in the yard, but he did not know that I saw him go down on the tree onto the roof and make a hole in the roof with his boot, but I did. I felt now that something would happen, but I trembled for Plym, for the moment he dropped out of sight in the roof, that man Shad appeared behind the barn. He had a habit of coming at all hours of the day and night, and, often in the daytime, he came out of the woods as though he was afraid to be seen. At this time, the man probably came up Little Bigger Hill, turned in back of the barns, and then, hearing the boys' voices in Pignut Lane, went through the woods to them. He found Plym's gun and he must have seen Stump, but did not know him, and they were all so busy in tormenting the minister that the finding of the gun and losing it again did not arouse any suspicion, at least none against Plym, for the boys did not see Stump, probably.

"And now you wonder why I did not leave when I had a chance. There wasn't much choice. If I went, and there was a mistake somewhere and everything failed, as I was afraid of, for there was a man watching outside and I couldn't see how it was to be done, and I was caught, I believed Jack would kill me as he threatened. If I staid, he might do it if he suspected me; but there was another reason for staying, the one that influenced me the most, perhaps. Aleck as a child and boy was the gentlest, most affectionate boy I ever saw, so loving and kind like his father; but Jack was different, wilful and cruel to his pet rabbits and any animal he could get hold of. Aleck had been kind to me in my

sickness; he was kind always when he dared to be—when Jack was not near. Jack drove him, kicked him, abused him, and many a time I have seen him point a pistol at Aleck and threaten to shoot him.

"And so, after thinking it over, I made up my mind not to leave—not to leave Aleck—the boy that was so dear to me in his youth—my brother's child—so loving and so honest as a boy; and I had promised his father that I would be as a mother to the boys as much as I could—O, he might have been such a likely man if Jack had not led him! And then I thought if you got away, that would be the end of this business, and the boys, Aleck at least, would be like other folks. I knew that somebody must be punished for this, but I could not think Aleck was so much to blame, for Jack drove him; but I suppose that is no excuse! Poor Aleck!

"Well, I staid. I met Plym at the window and told him why I couldn't go or tried to tell him, and then went back to my room. Soon after came the crash of the piazza. I waited in suspense, afraid every minute I'd be called up, but I wasn't. The next day my door was not unlocked as early as usual. As you've heard, I could go and come when I liked, if the key was not left in the lock, but this morning, I did not dare to use my key, for I did not know what might happen or who might appear. I think Jack and Aleck were in the woods or away from the house all night or from midnight till morning. When I was let out, I asked what that great noise was during the night and Jack said that the piazza had fallen.

"Of course, they told me nothing about your getting away, but I could see that something had happened, that they were uneasy, and so I thought you had succeeded in escaping, but I wasn't sure; there was no way

I could find out; all the doors were locked in the ell, probably, and if they were not the man who watched in the night, was up and around the ell for the very purpose, perhaps, that I should not find out that you'd gone if you had; but I noticed that no smoke was coming out of the ell chimney, and as I listened for the sound of the shoemaker's hammer, I heard nothing—no sound from the ell. The next day but one, I think it was, the boys seemed just as they did before; my heart sank when I saw the smoke come out of the ell chimney as usual. You had not got away or they had got you again. Anyway, somebody was in the ell as before. O, if I could only know what had happened! I could not ask Aleck; if I did, it might make them think I knew something or had suspicions. But things went on as usual and I believed that you were still in the ell.

"I was in a terrible state of mind, for perhaps there'd been murder or violence, anyway; I believed that Plym and the old peddler wouldn't give in till they had to. I couldn't live in this way; I must leave; the man Shad was there all the time now and I've never seen a man more repulsive to me than that man. I told Jack I wouldn't cook for that man; he said I'd have to. But the great reason for going away was because you were still there, as I thought, and that this bad business, in spite of everything was going on as usual; it must end; at least, cost what it might to me, I would get away from it; I might as well be in my grave as to live like this.

"I packed what I could carry easily in a small hand-bag and waited my opportunity—waited for Jack to get out of the way long enough for me to get to Aseneth Mottle's. I must go after dark, for if Jack missed me and set out after me, he could not find me so quickly in

the dark and I'd have more time. I knew the way through Pignut Lane straight to Aseneth's. One day a little before five o'clock, Jack told Aleck that he and the man Shad were going to the village. I was looking for just such an opportunity. They were coming home in time for supper, but I knew they would be late and that would give me more than an hour to get to Aseneth's; if my life depends upon it, I can get along pretty fast with my crutch. I said to Aleck, who was sitting by the fire, 'Time to milk the cows!' He took his milk pails and went out.

"I had everything ready in a jiffy, and, bag in my hand, was about to open the kitchen door and go out, when Jack walked in. What he came back for I've no idea; at the same moment almost, Aleck returned to the kitchen for the strainer, which he forgot to take with the pails. I had to put on a bold face now and have it out. I told them I couldn't stand it any longer to live like that and was going away; I walked to the door. Jack stood against the door and looked at me savagely; but I wasn't afraid of him now, and went to the door and took hold of the latch. He pushed me back—he did not strike me—harder than he intended to, perhaps, and I lost my balance and fell, and then I knew no more.

"It must have been nine o'clock the next day, or some day, I hardly knew then what day it was, when I came to myself; I was warm and comfortable and thought at first that I was in my bed; something was over my face, and, throwing it off, I saw the branches of trees and between them a little of the sky; I put out my hands and they touched dry leaves; then I sat up and tried to think; I felt a bunch on my temple and another on the back of my head, and I was faint and a little dizzy. I think I sat there an hour, trying to make out what it all meant.

Then I remembered what happened in the kitchen; I couldn't explain anything, but I came to the conclusion that I did get out of the kitchen in spite of Jack Carley, and, for some reason, had lost my mind or my way, wandered off and went to sleep where I was. However I came there, I wasn't hurt anywhere, and there seemed to be no reason why I should not get up and go on my way. What made me think that I had wandered where I was, was the fact that my crutch and bag were lying beside me.

"I didn't know where I was, but I'd come out somewhere if I kept on, and at last I did come to a cleared place called Little Breeches Common. I knew it well, for I used to visit a house near there in my school days. I knew where I was now—on the other side—other side from the Carley woods—of Hokopokonoket Swamp. I could take my bearings now and get to the railroad and then to my sister's in the city. In getting out of Little Breeches Common, I broke my crutch short off and had to do without it. I knew the way to the railroad station near the foot of Clover Top Hill, and I knew how to get to it cross lots through the big bayberry pasture and the huckleberry fields beyond.

"Now, as I've told you, I'd no idea how I got away; I remembered Jack standing with his back to the door, his pushing me and my falling, but I could not get back of that. However I got away, I could not think that it was because Jack was willing; it could not be; and now I expected to see Jack Carley at any moment; that was the reason that I went cross lots some of the way. When I came to the roads, I made sure first that no one was passing, for I believed that Jack Carley must be looking for me and as soon as anyone saw me and saw me limp, 'twould be easy to track me.

"That was the hardest day's work I ever had. I had eaten nothing since the day before, if I had kept account of days right, but the thought of getting away kept me up. Slowly I limped through the fields and pastures, getting water enough to drink, and on the edge of a pasture I found some frozen apples and rested here and made quite a dinner. It was almost dark when I got to the station—not a soul there when I went into the waiting room; and when the train came, only the station-master and two boys were there, for few went to the city at that time of day. I had some money I'd been hoarding, sewed into the lining of my dress, and when I reached the city, I hired a carriage and drove to my sister's. I kept up till I got there, and then broke down, and I've been in bed most of the time since.

"But I expected to see Jack Carley any day, and for that reason kept quiet. My sister don't take the papers except her Methodist weekly, but in this she read to me about the arrest of the boys. Then I wrote to Plym; he came to see me and told me all about it. When he told you were going to tell your story today, I asked him to help me come to tell you what I have. And, now, let me ask you, sir, and all of you, to have as much sympathy as you can for Aleck. He's guilty, O, he's guilty! But Jack drove him. He would never have done what he did do, if he'd been his master. Think of him as kindly as you can!"

At the conclusion of Hitty's story, the company drew a long breath of relief, not because the tale itself was ended, but because Hitty had escaped so easily out of the evils that beset her. Aseneth Mottle was deeply moved, and reproached herself for being so remiss in the discharge of her duty as a neighbor. In the interim now before the supper hour, Paige and Bruce, inviting

Plym to accompany them, descended to the lower hall to call upon Primus. They found him in what he called his "cubby" under the stairs smoking a short black pipe.

"Glad to see you, gentlemen. This is an honor I hardly expected—three gentlemen in a lump! Sorry I can't offer you anything—not even a pinch of snuff; but here are three good chairs and as soft as any made of hardwood. Well, quite a time we're having today, and that's a fact. Between waiting on the door, repulsing two tramps, turning back six peddlers and four sponging beggars, I've not got the whole story, Mr. Boye's or the woman's, but listening on the top stair as often as I could, I heard a good deal—bless my soul, I don't know but what I've heard enough—enough to show there's been a big game going on and that somebody'll dance for it. You're going to see that Lullywick woman this evening, I hear! Look here, take me along with you! I'm a kind of partner in the business. I've lifted and boosted here and there according to my inches, and I think I ought to be in at the roundup—"

"You shall go!" said Paige.

"Thank you! Now, if you've a few minutes to spare, I've a story to tell, and I think you'll say it's good as some that get into books—not quite so stirring as those you've heard today, but pretty stirring after all. Mr. Bruce tells me that you are writing a book—a real live book, with no useless stuffing in it. If you put in this story, I'll share the profits willingly and equally. You know, Mr. Paige, that I have but one subject and that I always stick to my text, that my title morning, noon and night is 'Charity.' I divide into two heads—'Charity Up' and 'Charity Down.' Charity is up when the deserving and thankful get a lift, and charity is down

with a black eye when the sponging ingrates get their hands in.

"Now, I'm way up on 'Charity Up' in three chapters —all short and sharp—right up to the point whittled fine. Now, then, Chap. I. Madame Randowell of Tokar Square, the place where the nobs and topknots live, is rich as an English lord, having no end of servants, horses, diamonds and all the precious stones that grow, and fine clothing by the cart load—this woman, I say, had an only son—only child. Of course, she expected he'd marry high and do honor to the family, that is, marry some more money. She was of high blood, I tell you, and of high character, too, kind and generous to the poor in her way. Fine woman, everyway! One day the son informed his mother that he was going to marry and get right about it—marry a poor girl, a clerk in a bakery—beautiful girl and all that, well educated, graduate of the high school. Her father died suddenly and left nothing, and she, being of the independent sort, went to work, taking the first thing she could find to do, and that was, clerking in a bakery. You can imagine what a picnic followed. Naturally the mother opposed and protested, but all to no purpose; the boy said he'd marry the girl if he had to beg; his mother said he might try it; in short, she gave him his choice to abandon his sweetheart or leave the house forever, cut off and banished for good. He left.

"Chap. II. The son married the bakery girl and set up housekeeping for himself. He was a lively chap and went to work with a will and got on very well. Life, not very luxurious, went on without a hitch, and time went by as though it rode in an express wagon, bringing, of course, the usual cares and troubles of a working man and three children. Later, the demand for bread was not

so easily satisfied; it was nip and tuck occasionally between bread and no bread; but the young man was made of good stuff; it took a lot of threshing to break him; not a word had passed between him and his mother since they parted.

"But at last, the young man was down—out of employment, discouraged, and the flour barrel and the coal bin empty; then he had the fever; that was the clincher that laid him out and threatened to make an end of him; the whole family was starving; the mother had pawned about everything to provide for the sick man and the children. 'About this time,' as the lying almanac says, look out for Hammat Geld. As you may suppose, he appeared at the right moment with his bag of money and all his loose change burning in his pocket—he's always running up against somebody that'll drain him. He came racing home with his coattails standing out straight behind him and harnessed me right into the business and ordered me to load the big hamper with bread and butter (spread thick), cheese and chicken, red pippin apples, kindling wood and kerosene oil. With our hamper, we walked in and took possession. Hammat Geld had already ordered the doctor and we found him there.

"Sorry sight, you better believe! Children just about naked! Everything gone to the pawnbroker's! I had a fire going in a twinkle, and those children in their barefeet were soon playing trundle-top with the red pippins and shouting like newsboys when their mouths were not full of cookey. Bless my hardened heart, if I didn't have to go to the window and make believe the smoke from the stove choked me, and catch a handful of tears that got the best of me. Well, that was something like things as they ought to be. To see all that and feel the

good of it in my soul (what little there is left) was pay enough for swabbing out the street with a score of boozy dead beats. I've seen a good many of these good times —the up side of charity, but I've seen so many more of the other kind that a fellow's heart comes to have a cast-iron jacket on it and his soul gets so pinched up that he might put it under his thumb nail and not know it was there.

"Let me see, where was I? O, we'd braced up the young man and his family, clothed the children and filled the coal bin and the red pippins were getting scarce in Hammat Geld's cellar. Feed me on shingle nails for a month if there wasn't by actual count thirty-nine barrels early in the fall in the cellar, and I don't believe my stomach's had time to welcome more than a half dozen."

"Six barrels! Well, that was a pretty good taste!" volunteered Paige.

"Six solitary apples, man! Another interruption like that will cost you the concluding chapter of this story, which is Chap. III. About this time, that is, the time when the young man fell sick or when he was discovered by Hammat Geld, in one of the rich churches of the city, a society of women was formed to help the poor. They agreed with themselves and each other that every one of them should help a poor family through the winter or through anything that appeared to be necessary. Some of them consulted Hammat Geld, all of them, perhaps, for he's the top sawyer charity man of the town, and among them was a high dame—well, they were all high as steeples one way—all on the top rung of the ladder in society and silks and satins and jewels—and this lady drove up one day with a footman and more style than you often see in one carriage drawn by two horses. She wouldn't come in, so Hammat Geld went

down and stood by her carriage on the sidewalk. I left the door ajar not knowing how soon my advice would be called for, to hear what was said and be prepared for duty.

"She didn't say she wanted a fine, aristocratic family to match her bonnet and furs and her surroundings generally—the gold on the harness and the silk beaver of the driver—but that was my opinion of her. Hammat Geld being a regular dealer in needy families has a stock to suit all customers at short notice on hand all the time, and ready to be delivered quick. Hammat Geld offered her a negro down in the Swamp with a broken leg and three ribs in splints—a 'longshoreman with a wife, mother and nine children. O, dear, no, that wouldn't do at all! I can't see why ebony wouldn't polish up well with plenty of bacon and bread, to match well with all the luxuries; but she wouldn't have the negro. Then Hammat Geld offered the man I told you about—fine young man, and as fine a wife—had seen better days—educated—refined—interesting—three children, lovely children.

"Yes, yes, just what she wanted. The bargain was made and the goods delivered. Hammat Geld never gives any names; if his customers cannot take his word, they may trade at some other charity shop. Well, this went on several weeks. Sometimes the woman sent her check and sometimes she rode up, enquired about her family and handed over the cash. I don't believe Queen Vic can put on more style than that woman did; and I don't know as anybody objects or even criticises, or what good it will do if they do. I'll admit it's none of my business and go on with my story.

"One day when the woman came, Hammat Geld asked her to call on the family she had been helping so

liberally. He told her that the man and his wife were grateful and wanted the pleasure of knowing who aided them so bountifully, and the privilege of thanking their benefactor. Hammat Geld gives names on neither side of the bargain unless there is some good reason for it; in this case the man did not know who helped and the woman did not know those she helped—did not know each other's names, I mean. The woman hesitated about visiting the family; evidently she did not consider that a part of the bargain. Where did the family live? Up in Coventry Lane. She observed that she'd heard that it was a dreadful place, full of fevers and walking delegates—I mean, walking pestilence and diverse plagues. It was, but Hammat Geld didn't tell her so, but he did say that it was good enough for him, if he had any business there, and he didn't see why it would hurt anybody else.

"He said this pretty sharp, for he was getting huffy. Nothing will stir up Hammat Geld quicker than any talk like that. But she decided to go if Hammat Geld would go along with her. Wish I'd been invited to go. I'd gone without my dinner to see what followed. They rode away in grand shape. The family was in a big tenement house and in the third story. Hammat Geld had to do some more talking to induce the woman to imperil her precious life by going into such a hive. But she got her bottle of salts screwed to her nose and climbed the stairs.

"The man had got the upper hand of the fever at this time and was sitting up before the fire in a rocker with a bed quilt around him; and when the woman entered, he had a bowl of gruel in his hand and was dipping his spoon into it as he turned to look at her.

"The woman gasped and stared. She saw her son sit-

ting in the chair—the son I told you about in the early chapters of this story—the son who was ordered to make himself scarce if he married the bakery clerk. Then she fell on him, gruel and all; he held her in his lap and the wife joined in and hugged them both, and all shed tears enough to float a ship. I don't know what Hammat Geld was doing while that was going on, but I can imagine. It's my opinion he stood on his head and cheered by knocking his heels together; anyway, that's the way he acted, almost, when he came home and told about it; we began to think we'd have to strap him down to prevent his flying. Concluding statement: The next day, about as quick as you can say Jack Robinson twice backward, that man and his wife and children were hustled out of that place and carried off in triumph to Tokay Square and set up in purple and fine linen to stay. I tell you, gentlemen, Charity has an inning once in the while that counts."

CHAPTER XXXI.

AT BAY AT LAST.

The clocks in the steeples were striking the hour of eight as several carriages, carrying Mr. Boye and his friends, turned into Bond street and approached the Lullywick Mansion. A block away the carriages halted lest the rumble and jar of wheels at the door might disturb the haughty mistress or her meditations.

In the shadow of a house, these uninvited guests formed quickly, and two by two, advanced to the Lullywick house and up the granite steps to the porch and portal. The lower part of the house, the great drawing room with its deeps and shoals and little puddles of bric-a-brac was illuminated brilliantly; every gas jet appeared to be on duty for the benefit of some event of more than ordinary importance. Was it possible that Madame Lullywick was holding a reception, a levee, tea, or kettle drum? Certainly the illumination was not in honor of the self invited guests now in a cluster at the entrance.

In response to the bell, the door opened about six inches. Evidently the sound of many feet had caught the ear of the porter—the same portly negro in dress suit and the marks of good living (and much of it) upon him. Perhaps he had good reason to be cautious, for strange visitors had knocked at that door many times since the stately Lullywick had had business elsewhere, and his soul had been tried by conflicting emotions. Bruce and Paige led the van and as the porter fumbled

with the chain to bar across, to hold a parley or to consult his mistress, they forced the door back quickly but gently and entered the hall. The first door leading from the hall to the drawing room, was closed. Bruce and Paige led the way through the hall and entered the second door. In this room, the back part of the drawing room, was Madame Lullywick, her two daughters and five guests, neighbors, probably, making informal call in their best bonnets and gowns. Madame Lullywick half reclined upon a velvet, gold-corded cushion on a sofa opposite the door. She wore black silk, a bunch of roses of the color of her high cheeks on her breast, and diamonds flashed here and there; in her hand she held a gold-rimmed eyeglass and it was swinging back and forth as the unbidden guests entered; of jewels—there was enough to dazzle the natives—even the bejeweled natives of Bond street.

What impudence, brazen effrontery and disregard not only of all conventionality, but also of decency; her husband a felon awaiting trial and sentence, about which there was no doubt, and she presiding merrily with a loquacious and witty spirit to aid her, over an evening tete-a-tete. And who and what were these women sitting at her feet and applauding, for they would not be present if they could not applaud? It is an extraordinary and perhaps comforting fact to the criminal population that whatever may be the depth of infamy into which a brazen soul may run, supporters or sympathizers will appear, sit down beside to coddle and to make much of.

When Bruce and Paige entered, the swinging eye glass paused and Madame Lullywick came to an upright posture like Jack in the box when the lid is sprung; the color in her cheeks mounting to the forehead outrivaled that of the roses on her breast; there was the look that

some of her unbidden guests knew so well—a look of speechless rage and astonishment. In front of her was a table on which stood a costly lamp having a crimson shade; when she came to her feet, the crimson lamp shade softened the light a little that fell on her face. Ah, she was superb to look at—at a distance! Her hair was coiled on the top of her head, giving her the appearance of being a foot taller. Standing there with folded arms, the head thrown back, she reminded the beholder of Queen Elizabeth as represented on canvas at the moment when she straightened up and looked at her signature just added to Mary's death warrant—at that moment when she said—interpreting look and attitude—"Now the world is mine!"

The reporters advanced to within a foot of the table that stood between them and Madame Lullywick. So busy was her mind with this affront—the entry of these men, thus boldly, and unbidden—that at first she saw nothing else; as has been shown, her quick mental capacity in an emergency was lacking; one problem at a time was enough. Paige and Bruce paused near the table. Behind them came Archelaus and Aseneth Mottle, Mr. and Mrs. Apton, Plym and Hitty Carley, Mrs. Latwell and Mary Latwell, Mr. Geld and Arthur Wainworth, Primus and the four citizens of Oldport. These fell back, that is, opened ranks. It was quickly done, and during this movement, Madame Lullywick's eyes were still on the reporters, now on one and then on the other, flashing back and forth, and becoming more fierce and glaring.

And now, Tristam Boye with Hope clinging to his arm, followed by Captain Bonny and Sergeant March, advanced between the open ranks and stood before, face to face with the woman who had planned well but who

had failed at last and was now at bay. No pen or brush can portray that countenance—the expression of it, and the eyes—ah, the eyes! Did man ever see human eyes with such fire and fierceness in them? The eyelids opened wider as though the eye would spring forth; the firm set jaw lost its grip and begun to weaken; the mouth opened, and across the face flitted like shadows under a tree tossed by the wind, the reflection of the emotions of her soul; her eyes were fixed on her victims; they did not flinch at first—eye to eye, hard and glittering as polished steel—but now they—the terrible eyes—began to change—to lose something of their fierceness; and the countenance began to soften; the mouth quivered, or the lips relaxed a little; the left hand was raised slowly to the forehead which it caressed a moment, and then fell to her side again as though it had suddenly become heavy; now the body shivered, swayed, and now both hands flew to her breast and clutched like talons over the heart; and then, with a piercing shriek, she fell heavily, a convulsive movement of the body causing it to go backward and fall violently upon the floor.

The reporters sprang forward, raised the fallen woman and placed her upon the sofa, and a physician who lived near was summoned; but in vain; Madame Lullywick was dead. Then followed what every one who saw and heard may ever shrink from in recollection. The daughters of Madame Lullywick have not been foremost in this story; but the little that has come to light has not shown much in their favor; while resembling their mother, yet they had not even her force of character; they inherited the weaknesses of the father, Alfred Tukins; occasionally the Boye sense came to the surface, but this, unsupported by education or moral training, played an insignificant part in their lives.

When the daughters realized that the mother was dead, they turned upon the "Canton beggar," as they called Hope Boye, with the fury of demons; for some unknown reason, they conceived Hope Boye (whom they did not know by that name, however) to be the cause of this strange scene and the tragic ending; bereft of reason, furious, like caged animals liberated, they attempted to do violence. Her father, Paige and Bruce stood by Hope and received the hot onslaught of the mad, screaming women. Failing to reach Hope to do personal injury, they seized heavy glass ornaments standing on a side table, to hurl at the object of their wrath, when Captain Bonny caught the hands of one and Sergeant March the other.

This tumult or perhaps the last despairing cry of the mother, brought upon the scene the Lullywick boys who had been in the upper part of the house. They were like their father, Alfred Tukins—weak and unstable by birth, and what little strength Nature had bestowed upon them had been wasted in strong drink and a dissolute life. Hands deep in trousers pockets, these boys or young men, looked on stupidly yet insolently, unable, it may be supposed, to form an idea as to the cause of this uproar; they knew, however, that the officers of the law were not present without warrant; they held their peace and awaited developments; so many changing circumstances had come in the way during the last few weeks, that, doubtless, they were prepared for more disclosures; they showed their breed and breeding when they merely glanced at, stolidly, almost brutally, their mother in the sleep of death.

What was enacted here was enough to harden the heart of any man, and no man schooled as he might be in Christian ethics, could resist it or its influence under

the circumsctances. The daughters in their unreasonable and furious outcry, repeated—screamed in coarse language—the base calumny in reference to Hope's birth. True, this came from the mother's teaching, and the daughters could not be held responsible for the sins of the mother, yet this bitter cry, this infamous charge, went far, sunk deep and left its mark. The father held his daughter to his breast while the right hand, not clenched and menacing, but open and free, was stretched forth in protest, and his face was livid.

But the storm subsided; the body of Madame Lullywick was removed to the guest chamber above, and Aseneth Mottle and Mrs. Latwell rendered the service necessary till the undertaker's assistants arrived. The daughters relapsed into hysterics, and moaning and wailing, but did not follow the body of the mother to the chamber above or manifest any interest in its disposition. In the presence of death, all was stayed. Mr. Boye wished to stop all proceedings, retire from the house, and not enter it again till the last rites had been observed, but Captain Bonny opposed vigorously.

"Come this way," said Captain Bonny to Mr. Boye and Mr. Geld. "There! Stand so, if you please, so I can look between you and at the same time watch those Lullywick rascals. The sergeant is keeping his eye on them, too. Mr. Boye, this is your property—stolen property recovered. Not a scrap of it belongs to these Lullywicks, for they never earned a dollar or added a dollar to the estate; they—the whole of them—have simply helped to reduce it; even the clothes on their backs was bought with your money—"

"But," interrupted Mr. Boye, "it is not probable that the children know anything about me. Doubtless they are innocent of all complicity or participation."

"That may be, sir, and it may lead a man as generous as you are inclined to be, to treat them well in the face of all that's happened. But let me tell you what I know about these Lullywicks—these two young fellows. You see how they take the death of their mother; they show no more feeling than a horse for the death of its mate; they appear stupid; they are; but not so thick-headed as they appear; they are gamblers; the man Lullywick had nothing to give them; they earned nothing—never a dime, and their mother tightened up on them sometime ago; that is, we judge that to be the case from convincing circumstances. We know that since Lullywick made off, these fellows have shoved up, pawned, I mean, some silver spoons. They are cracking no cribs, probably, except this one; we know where the spoons are, and I shall examine for any marks.

"What I am trying to impress on you is that these sons are almost, if not quite, criminals, and that when they learn what this means—this visit tonight, they will loot this house if we leave it a moment, this very night—as soon as our backs are turned. You know what Jack Carley tried to do. In that trunk was a fortune, collected in a few minutes in this house; this woman was a reckless buyer of brilliants—of anything to make a show. In this room, right before us, lying around in all this litter, is a small fortune to men who have not a penny, that may be carried off in a man's pocket. For example, look at this one table at your elbow! Why, that carved ivory paper cutter is worth, I imagine, twenty-five dollars; and the room and the house is full of such things, not to mention the precious stones. The diamonds on the body of the woman at this moment, if the ladies have not taken them off, are worth thousands of dollars. But how she was able to keep all this out

of the pawn shop is a mystery to me. When people get to trading with a fence, I mean a pawnbroker, nothing is too small to neglect.

"Now, I respect the dead and advise nothing that would tend to show it disrespect, but I respect the living, too. Duty is duty, and there's a duty to the living as well as to the dead. Don't leave this house a moment to these irresponsible daughters or these scoundrel sons. They know something's up; that's what makes them so quiet; and this very moment, I lay a wager, they are planning something; they are looking around this room; I know the look; it is the look of a thief. I did not expect, of course, what happened, but I expected something. I had no idea that this woman would yield without a struggle, and I provided for anything that might happen. I have several officers within call.

"Now, sir; place this house in my charge; everything will be done orderly and decently; but no one will be allowed to leave this house till searched. And the servants; when a new master comes, who does not know what is on hand in the silver chest or anywhere, they, or some of them may take advantage. I'll put in a keeper with assistants—all reliable and honorable men—to take charge till after the funeral. After you've gone, if you approve, I'll get the sons and daughters together; and then let Mr. Geld, if he will, tell them what this means; and let the gentlemen from Oldport be present to prove what he says, if they doubt, as they are likely to—Ha! That older boy has slipped something of the color of silver into his pocket! I'll see what that is before long."

"Take the Captain's advice," advised Mr. Geld. "You are inclined to forgive and to forget; but you've suffered enough! Remember with whom you have to deal. You

know I preach, and I try to practice, charity, but in this case, any concession on your part will be used to rob you! Pearls before swine! Yielding to serpents that they may do their deadly work the better."

"That older Lullywick boy is filling his pockets fast! He's just slipped something into his hip pocket! We'll overhaul them by and by. Another thing," said the Captain, "Bruce and Paige intended to print their story tomorrow morning; but it ought not to come out till after the funeral, or there'll be a great mob of people here." But when Captain Bonny consulted the reporters, they objected to postponement.

"Why," said Paige, "the matter is out of our hands; the story is in print, every word of it; we've read the proof, and there's nothing to add except what has happened tonight. Impossible to stop it! Mob? Well, let the mob come! It can't be kept out! Besides, the women who were in the house when we came, will spread the news; and the doctor that came—he'll give it away. I expect any moment to hear the bell ring; there'll be a reporter from every paper in town here before long! Too late to stop it!"

Madame Lullywick's guests, the five women who were present when the unbidden visitors entered, fled without ceremony when Nettie and Mollie Lullywick began the part in which they were so prominent; and so far as known, not one of these guests—not a neighbor—showed any concern in the event, at least not one appeared with offers of condolence, sympathy or service usual in such cases.

Paige accompanied Mrs. Latwell and Mary Latwell to Elm Cottage and then returned to the Lullywick house; Bruce went with Mr. Boye to Mr. Geld's house, leaving Hope at Elm Cottage on the way, and he too

hastened back to the Bond street house, for the day's work was not done. As soon as Mr. Boye departed, the Captain invited the Lullywicks into the library to hear what Mr. Geld had to say in the presence of Mr. Boye's friends from Oldport. When the door closed the elder Lullywick, with a terrible oath shouted, "Some of you fellers'll sweat fer this! You hear me! I want to know pretty d——d quick what's the meaning of all this, and I want to know what that—" (Here followed a vile expression in regard to Hope Boye, worse than anything yet spoken.) But he stopped for the want of breath; Captain Bonny's broad hand clasped his neck like a vice, nearly lifted him off his feet and shook him as a terrier might a rat.

"These gentlemen will give you all the information you want," said the Captain. "When the time comes, you may ask questions if you are civil and your tongue clean. If you open your mouth again like that, I'll gag you! Sit down now and be quiet!"

But he muttered sullenly that he would stand, and the reason was apparent an hour later. He had so many things in his hip pockets and a long pearl ruler up his back that he could not sit with comfort. Mr. Geld began his story. Captain Bonny withdrew, leaving Sergeant March to keep watch of the young men, and, out of their hearing, ordered him to throttle either of them if their tongues ran wild. Then the Captain summoned the men who were within call, took possession of the house, and began a cursory inspection of it that he might know what there was to protect. The daughters had each a sleeping room and a dressing room out of it. And Agnes Canton or Hope Boye, heir to all, occupied a narrow room on the servants' floor! But comparisons are odious always. In the daughters' rooms was cluttered a

great mass of costly clothing; but this did not interest the Captain; there must be jewels to keep company with so much fine apparel—so much silk, satin and seal skin, but none, not a finger ring was in sight, and there was reason enough, probably; they might mistrust the servants, and possibly, their brothers more.

Madame Lullywick's suite of rooms—two bed rooms, dressing room and bath—were locked and the key found in the pocket of the dress worn by Madame Lullywick that evening. In these rooms occupied by Madame Lullywick and her husband was the most extraordinary collection of fine wearing apparel ever seen outside, perhaps, the clothes presses of the Empress of the French before the fall of the empire and the close of Eugenie's reign—a marvellous display of almost incredible quantity and value, but of precious stones and metals—not even a stick pin in sight. The mother knew to what her sons had come, and guarded her treasures first by keeping the doors locked when they were in the house, and by confining her tokens of wealth to a chest in a closet. Here was found all that Jack Carley failed to march off with and more besides—all the gems worn or owned by the mother or the daughters—another extraordinary collection and one of great intrinsic value. The wealth of Roger Boye had run out like water through a sieve, and the wonder was that any was left. The mother's rooms were locked and sealed.

In the boys' room, the Captain found what he expected to find—nothing, not even an extra suit of clothing. When men begin to contribute to the pawnbroker, everything goes, even a hair brush. The china closet was locked and provided with the additional precaution of a heavy padlock. In this room was another museum collection of rare china and glassware; here, also, was a

ponderous oak chest, with padlocks, filled with gold and silver plate. This room was locked and sealed and an officer posted in the dining room.

Mr. Geld had reached the end of his story as the Captain entered. The elder Lullywick declared that "it was all a d——d lie," and his brother was of the same opinion, and both were sure that "somebody would sweat before morning." The daughters were stupefied by the disclosures, said nothing, and stared hopelessly before them. The boys marched out of the room, the elder saying, "It's all a d——d lie! I'll see the chief (chief of police) and make you fellers sweat yet! See if I don't!"

The Captain in the background, watched the Lullywicks as they went upstairs. First they tried the doors to the daughters' rooms, and then attempted to enter the mother's rooms; finding them all locked and cursing their luck as they termed their disappointment. Baffled, they descended to the first floor by a back way, stealing along like footpads, stealthy as cats, and appeared at the door of the china closet. Still unsuccessful, they bolted into the dining room, where the table was laid for breakfast and on which was solid silver spoons and forks. There they met the officer on guard, and retired swearing vengeance. Next, they appeared in the hall and put on their overcoats.

"Before you go," said the Captain, appearing suddenly upon them, "give me what you have in your pockets. They replied with oaths and continued to button their coats.

"Hand over," said the Captain, "or I'll help myself."

Twenty-three "articles" came forth from pockets and under their coats. One thing leads to another. The Captain saw that the coat worn by the elder Lullywick

was of extraordinary value, apparently. Strange that a man who was pawning spoons and second best clothing should have a coat so elegant and so costly longer than required to barter for ready cash.

"Take off the coat, and let me examine it," said the Captain. "Yes, here it is! I thought it answered to the description of a coat left by Lawyer Melville in an ante room of the court house. He said his name was written on the back of the lining of the left hand upper pocket. Here it is—'A. D. Melville.' You'll have to leave it! Where'd you get it?"

"Bought it of a feller!"

"Hum! Where'd you get the spoons you shoved up?"

"Didn't shove up no spoons!"

"Good night! You can go if you want to!"

The personal history of the Lullywick family may close here. The boys were not seen again; it was known, however, that they dropped the name of Lullywick and trusted their fortunes to "Tukins," their father's name, and that they followed a dissolute, if not criminal life, in another part of the country, as might be expected of men, so far from the condition of civilized human beings as to turn their backs on their mother's funeral. After the funeral, the daughters disappeared also. Mr. Boye, still mindful of the fact that the children had no knowledge of the injustice dealt out to him, and having no reason to link them with what he had suffered—nothing against them to their discredit except the assault on Hope at the time of the mother's death, and even that had been forgiven, in view of the fact that it sprung from the mother—endeavored to save them from impending fate; the effort was not merely formal—not for the sake of appearance or to satisfy conscience; but in vain was every attempt to lead the daughters to an un-

derstanding, appreciation, of what might be before them if they persisted in the course apparently immediately in prospect. Mrs. Apton and Mrs. Latwell followed Nettie and Mollie Tukins, for they, too, had dropped the name of Lullywick, to another city and in the name of their uncle, Tristam Boye, offered them the means to live in comfort and respectability. But as might be expected of the descendants of Alfred Tukins, the daughters spurned such offers and gave in return spiteful words and loud denunciations; in the Tukins fog of unreason, it was impossible to reach them, and they drifted out of sight and hearing of those who were willing to rescue them.

CHAPTER XXXII.

IN THE SCALES OF JUSTICE.

The trial of the criminals was a passing show of great local and temporary interest. Ourtown was present and listened with open mouth to the recitals of all witnesses. Theodore Lullywick was placed first in the scales, and to give the beam equipoise, twenty years' sentence for forging and uttering was attached to the counter weight. If he lived to see the end of the sentence, or the time it represented, which is doubtful, he must answer to another charge. Peter Mills, the burglar, also received a sentence of twenty years; and, he, also, when his twenty years of hard labor are completed, may be called upon to plead to another indictment. Jack Carley and Jeremy Shadler received each the sentence of ten years at hard labor, and Jack was happy to escape so easily, for he had come to court expecting to be confronted with the crime of manslaughter. As Aleck was an unwilling tool in the hands of his brother, and as several persons, among them Mr. Boye, petitioned for clemency, he was given a sentence of one year.

As already intimated, the Carleys expected to be tried for a greater crime, for they had been kept in ignorance of the escape of Hitty. When Hitty entered the court room, both Jack and Aleck jumped to their feet and stared in wonder, which gave place speedily to a look of relief and rejoicing. When she held out her hand and said softly, "I know you didn't mean to do it!" they clung to her, greatly affected; the tears rolled down

Aleck's cheeks and Jack was penitent, at least. A great weight had been lifted from their souls and they became comparatively cheerful. Thus sentence, less than they expected, was easier to bear.

After the trial, before Jack and Aleck were taken to jail, Bruce and Paige were allowed to see them. On the night of the capture at the Carley Farm, on the way to the city, Jack had given Bruce and Paige brief details of the trade made by Lullywick between Jack and Shadler; but there was not opportunity to learn the particulars of Lullywick's capture, and his imprisonment in the Carley house.

Aleck was downcast and shy and had only tears and protestations to offer; but Jack, after a good dinner, was talkative, almost merry, and accepted his fate philosophically.

"Well, Mr. Reporter, Peddler, what are you after now? You ought to be satisfied with such a good stroke of business! You played some high cards, young man, and, I'll be d——d, you took all the tricks. But how did you get on to the business; that's what puzzles me! You testified about poking round as a deaf peddler and calling at our house, and fumbling up and down when you ought to have been asleep; but there must have been something ahead of that. Where'd you get your first clue?"

"O, we, that is, Paige, Wainworth and myself, saw Mr. Boye in the path in the woods when he attempted to run away, and was led back by you and Shadler and Aleck. We were within fifty feet of you when you overtook him."

"The devil! You saw that, did you, old gray beard! Well, tell me this, for it did not come out at the trial and perhaps it had no connection. When we were going

to cart off Milo, somebody, something fell out of that tree and pitched on Shad and nearly broke his neck. Do you know anything about that, or was it some of Milo's friends?"

"Yes, we know all about it. Milo's friends had nothing to do with it."

"One of your gang, eh? Who was it?"

"I'm willing to tell anybody what I did, but what others did—"

"Others? What's the odds, now?"

"You'll come out in ten years, and—"

"O, I see! And go hunting for all of you, eh, and smash every one? Not if I know myself. Look here, old gray beard, this racket has knocked the devil out of me. His majesty—the devil, I mean—has not a finger's grip on me. Hard as I may appear to you, I'm not a fool! I can put two and two together and make four every time. If I live to get out again, I swear, I'll never drink another drop, and I'll go back to that farm, if I can get a living there, and be, if possible, a respectable member of society—run for sheriff or postmaster. Rum and then loafing, was the cause of everything. But you needn't tell who was in that tree. Now that I know that he was one of your tribe, I'm sure 'twas Plym. No fists in your crowd could give Shad such a thumping except Plym's. Plym's a square boy, and I hope to live to be his neighbor again. But you old meddler, you, for you engineered everything, what did you put your hand in there for; what did you want of Milo? Did you expect to get the reward offered for him—if you knew anything about a reward?"

"No. We didn't know anything about Milo. I didn't engineer it or know about it till it was over. The man in that tree was merely looking around. When he saw

you come out with Milo, he thought it was Mr. Boye, and made that dash to save him. When he reached the place where the horses were left, he found that his passenger had disappeared. He knew you would follow and laid on the bank near and saw you and Aleck take the team from Budd."

"Young man, that's mighty interesting! But it was lucky for Plym or whoever it was, that we didn't run afoul of him. We'd peppered him!"

"He'd peppered you, for he was loaded to the muzzle. Lucky for you you didn't get in his way! But tell me, Mr. Carley, why you appeared so unconcerned after you lost Mr. Boye. You must have known that he would proceed against you and all implicated."

"Dead men tell no tales! The day after your man got away, I met a man from up Crying Brook way. He said they'd found a dead tramp in a rick of hay—an old man. I hustled round lively, got a team and went to see that dead tramp quick, I tell you. I saw only his head and face, but I'd taken my oath that was our old man. You know what a storm came up that night—"

"But the peddler—he'd talk—"

"The peddler be d——d; excuse me! But what did we care for the peddler when Boye was dead. We believed that the peddler and Boye got together in some way—two d——d sly ones—and that the peddler, sick of his job, left the old man to shirk for himself. Bah, the peddler! I tell you we didn't care a d——n for the peddler—a man who would get roaring drunk on a little cider! With all your smartness, old gray beard, I wonder you let a little cider get away with you—"

"I didn't. When you, Aleck and Shadler went to the door, I poured all that cider into the sink—every drop—"

"What! And you heard every word that was said?"

"Every word."

"Young man, old man, peddler, reporter, I begin to have some respect for you! Well, I'll be d——d, if that wasn't slick!"

"Tell us how you captured Lullywick; only a part of the story has come out."

"Now that Boye was gone, we might as well realize at once all we could. We demanded ten thousand a piece —thirty thousand in all, to put him under ground. Let me say here, we never intended, whatever you may have inferred from the conversation you overheard when you ought to have been drunk, to commit murder; but we did mean to drive the Lullys to hand over a good sum. You see it would be folly to kill the goose that laid the golden egg; as long as we held Boye, we could bleed the Lullys; the Lullys would soon find this out, but what if they did; we had them by the throat. Well, when Lully said he'd pay the thirty thousand, we suspected him; we thought we might get ten thousand for the three of us; but that was a little high; we'd taken five and no questions asked—till the next time. But when he came out flat footed and said we could have the thirty—Humph! that was too much! He couldn't gull us like that; he meant to dodge; he told us to come at two o'clock; he did not appear till after the banks closed and said he'd been detained; he had—by the last dinner of the kind he'll ever get; then he gave us checks and asked us to come in the morning and he'd cash them.

"We made up our minds that he was going to cut stick and slope, and we kept all our eyes on him; we saw him buy a ticket and take a parlor car with two well filled bags along. We had a great interest in those bags. We took the same train, but what to do, we didn't know;

the idea of kidnaping him came suddenly when we were at the end of our wits; if we couldn't get Lully himself, we must get possession of the bags. It was a wild and dangerous scheme and it took my breath away at first to think of it; but we decided to try it.

"Shad went through the car where Lully was and came upon him as though accidental. Lully was a little surprised, perhaps a good deal, but Lully is not especially sharp, although he has that reputation; he smelt nothing, and had a brief chat with Shad. He remembered that he'd agreed to meet us the next morning, and told Shad he was going only a little way and would be on time in the morning. To show how sharp Lully is, hear this: While he was telling Shad that he was going only a short way, there was his ticket for New York in his cap band. O, Lully is wonderfully bright! Shad wished him a pleasant journey and left him.

"Now, every train on that road must come to a full stop at what is called a 'know nothing' crossing—a place where another track crosses the line. There is no station there—nothing was there to interfere with our plans. If Lully refused to swallow the bait, as he might, then Shad and I were determined to get the bags off the train at that place, if we had to strangle Lully to do it. It was a reckless game; but the idea of seeing Lully pegging shoes in the place just vacated by our esteemed friend Boye, gave me a deal of nerve.

"As we were approaching the crossing, Shad went to Lully and told him that the Hon. Tom—somebody, Lully's particular friend, was in the next car behind and wanted to see him a moment on urgent business, that he, Shad, had mentioned to the Hon. Tom that he, Lully, was aboard, that the Hon. Tom had a sprained ankle or he would not trouble Lully, and, moreover, would leave

the train at the next station. Would Lully have the kindness to step into the car a moment. Lully swallowed everything, placed the bags on the seat and threw his fur-lined coat over them; the train began to slacken; now was the time, if ever. When Lully followed Shad and turned the corner around the buffet, I ran forward from the other end of the car, seized the bags and the overcoat; we were all on the platform together when the train slowed down. Lully did not know me in the dark for my hat was over my eyes and my coat collar turned up. I jumped off, threw down the bags, and then returned to help Shad; we hustled him off lively; Shad stopped his mouth, while I held him around the arms; there was no porter or brakeman between those two cars; we held him close up to the train till the train moved off so that none of the passengers, especially the Hon. Tom, might see anything.

"Sorry the poor man lost his tall hat; he wore a silk cap, and the tile was in the rack of the car. With a scarf bound over his cap and face, he would not be recognized in the dark by even the Hon. Tom. Shad found a farmer who carried us to Balltown for big pay; from there we walked a few miles to break the connection, and then got another lift by another farmer; we got within three miles of home by seven the next morning and walked the rest of the way. Well, it was a sight to see Lully when we told him that he was in Boye's old place, and that he could now have a chance to see how well we had carried out our part of the contract—to see Lully in ball and chain frying salt pork and cabbage was something to remember, I tell you, for it was the rule at the Carley Hotel that the guest should be his own cook, for then he could have everything to his mind—to provide everything except bread, angel cake, Washington pie,

ices, jellies, Charlotte roosters and such trifles which we always furnished with plenty of solid ware—solid tin—as bright and shiny as the user was disposed to scrub them up.

"The contents of the bags was too much for us; what to do with so much money, we didn't know; we must go slow and work it off by degrees, here and there, a little in a number of banks; but we could not do this till the excitement about Lully died out, and Shad had been forgotten; a man in my shoes clutches at a straw of suspicion; although I might not be associated with Lully's disappearance, yet I had been seen often in Shad's company, and Shad, you know, was Lully's confidential agent and was known as such. So you see, I was afraid to move hand or foot. But Lully was generous; he said he'd give us half, if we'd let him go. How accommodating! We informed him that we had the whole of it and that he needn't trouble himself about it.

"I told you before, we didn't care a red for that old fraud, the peddler, who pretended to be drunk when he wasn't; and we didn't till we got old Lully on our hands; Boye was dead, as we supposed; but now, we began to think of that d——d old peddler, for, of course, wherever he was, he'd give his easy tongue a free rein and gabble; and somebody, perhaps Budd, would hear of it, and come poking round to see if that old peddling rascal told the truth. And, beside, Hitty was getting her back up, and it was time to do something. We had as good as decided to get rid of Lully; nothing more was to be made by keeping him now except to give him a taste of our fine and wholesome fare. We intended to get him to some port, put a ticket and money in his pocket and set him adrift on some ocean steamer; we'd give him a chance to begin life over again in some foreign coun-

try. But we dallied, having become so fat and lazy, and so fond of cider and harder swig that—well, here we are, every mother's son of us, where we ought to be, I'm bound in honor to say, and where, as I look back, I wonder we didn't get before."

"But what did you intend to do with Shadler?"

"O, Shad? Really I forgot to tell you about him. It's a short story. We mistrusted that Shad had too great a personal interest in Lully's gripsacks. We set a trap for him, and caught him. He was about to make off with the whole of the boodle. Consequently, we chained him up to stay till we could get rid of Lully, and then divide the swag."

"What were you going to do with Milo that night when something fell out of the tree and hit Shadler?"

"Going to take him to town, keep him shady in Shad's place, and then give him a chance to run to Canada, where he said he might have a job—at his old business, I suppose, cracking safes or anything else if money was to be got out of it. Milo's a fool. He says that we intended to give him up and claim the reward. Can't any man, with half an eye, see that the moment we did that, he'd squeal and give us dead away? If he was such a fine cracksman, he'd no brains for some other things. The fact is, Milo got to be such a drunkard that he could not attend to business; but it was to our interest to treat him well, and we did; he lies when he says we were going to give him up. O, time's up, is it? Well, give my regards to Plym, and tell him to keep an eye to the farm till Aleck gets out; Hitty's got the letting of it if any man is foolish enough to think he can get a living off it, and wants to hire. And tell him, if you please, that if I live to see the end of the ten years, I'll be a better neighbor than I have been."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IN CONCLUSION.

Time running, racing on to the delight of youth and to the dismay of age, has vaulted into the month of June, anno domini succeeding that in which the events hereinbefore recorded had taken place. Nature in her full and flowing robes of bright colors and her golden tresses glistening in the sun as the balmy air tosses and toys with them. And the soul of man, not bound up and held down (like a cask) with hoops of selfishness, grows buoyant in the great upspringing of life everywhere.

Elm Cottage is a bower of roses within and without; the overhanging bloom of the porch and the garden trellis nods in the breeze and salutes the blossoms wooing the sunlight in the windows of the cottage. The balmy air from the far away hills, strained by the pines and cooled by the river, trips through the house and flowers and foliage dance in response.

Tristam Boye, agile as a youth, and Hammat Geld, beaming upon all and rubbing his hands briskly together as he does always when anything interesting is impending, are the first to arrive. Mr. Boye holds Hope's bright, animated face in his hands and takes a last look at it. Archelaus and Aseneth Mottle, followed meekly by Plym, come in with much bustle, on the part of Aseneth, and many words, all pitched in the same key—a ringing, jubilant key. When Aseneth attends, no bride can go forth to meet the groom without her consent—till this or that is turned up or down, twisted here and

there and given a final polish. Her broad face glows in her interested management, and her critical eye surveys and measures carefully before final judgment is let slip. And she looks proud, yet humble and happy, when Hope calls her "Aunty" and asks her opinion of every detail.

Plym is no longer a boy, if Aunt Aseneth still clings to that idea, in that new suit, with the name of a crack city tailor inside the collar, bought for the occasion at the express command of Mr. Boye. The broad shirt sleeve cuffs held by red eyed dog's head buttons, are like manacles to Plym, evidently, but the occasion demands any sacrifice and he bears up bravely and longs for the end of it. Archelaus has discarded the blue broadcloth, under the Boye administration, and appears in sombre black—in an elegant middle aged Prince Albert; and for the first time, in company, perhaps, has freedom of movement without apprehension of parting seams.

Plym blushes like a young girl when Mrs. Latwell addresses him as "Mr. Hanker." Well, he is getting on to the upper part of the ladder, now! And he is in greater confusion and perspiration when Hope Boye seizes him and without ceremony drags him into the sitting room, stands back and looks at his suit admiringly and praises it, and pins a bunch of roses to the lapel of his coat. Captain Bonny and Sergeant March walk in as though they were at home and shake hands all around in a hearty way. Hitty Carley, in Quaker gray, rides up like any lady in the land. Arthur Wainworth comes with Bruce and Paige. Bruce's father and mother and brothers and sisters follow, and, also, Paige's father and mother and sister. Mr. and Mrs. Apton are present and school friends and pupils of both Mary Latwell and Hope Boye. The little cottage has room for no more.

And now, Bruce and Hope and Paige and Mary Latwell are standing before the clergyman. There is a space between them and they wonder why they stand thus apart; but they have taken their places assigned them by the officiating clergyman, who smiles knowingly and looks forth wisely. What is he waiting for? Ah! Tristam Boye and Mrs. Latwell, leaning on his arm, enter the room from the hall and take their place before the clergyman between their children. Surprise, rejoicing is seen in every countenance. Hope and Mary, astonished, glad, can hardly resist the impulse to exclaim and embrace, but the clergyman begins, tying the knot in the centre, then on both ends, at the right and left. It is done! The triple wedding is over! Congratulations follow in an overwhelming stream. Hope Bruce, in her father's arms, exclaims, "You sly one!" Mr. Boye and his bride remain in Elm Cottage, but Paige and Mary and Bruce and Hope go separate ways.

Time trips on again to the month of August, the harvest time of gnats and flies and creeping things, and much enjoyment comes to them for the summer boarder is at large and at their mercy. Early in the year, Mr. Boye, foreseeing what was to come, began to build a wide, roomy summer house on the knoll, above the Mottle farm house, between the big elm and the butternut tree. At this time—August—it was not complete, owing to the independence of builders in this age of progression; but here the three brides and the three grooms passed the sultry days under the watchful care of Aseneth Mottle, assisted by Sis' Ann.

Bruce and Paige were no longer reporters; an enterprise of some pith and moment of their own now gave all their talents play. Bruce, Paige and Wainworth (willing to exchange the rod for the rule) and Mr. Boye

as silent partner, were joint owners of a city paper—a paper that flourished and had in its hands a big lever of influence in the trend and swing of events, as any publication may have when brains, pluck and money are welded together.

In the note found by Plym under the door of the Carley Mansion, Mr. Boye agreed to share with his rescuers all that could be recovered of what belonged to him; he kept his word as far as his friends would allow him. Plym was indeed "Mr. Hanker" now, with a bank account, and a pair of frisky gray colts attached to a stylish top buggy. When the twilight deepens, Plym puts on his tailor suit and brightest tie and rides away behind the gray colts as they scamper toward Talking Back Valley at the foot of Chipmonk Mountain, where lives near Crying Brook, Lucinda Belmore, an old friend and schoolmate. When he marries (Aseneth says the time is near, for she heard him talking in his sleep—always a sure sign under twenty-one), he is to have as additional reward any farm he may choose, if it can be bought; but Aseneth says that he has chosen a site just around Two Shoe Corner on the farm, and that a Queen Anne Cottage with blinds and porch (as nearly like Elm Cottage as it can be) and a barn for the colts with Stump's effigy for a weather vane. But Plym, when questioned, replies, "I-I dunno! I-I ain't tellin' ev'rythin'!"

Plym's friends (from Teazle Acre to Breakneck Hill) delight in recounting his exploits in the unshackling of the prisoner and the undoing of Budd, in never wearying detail and occasional exaggeration. In their opinion, Plym is as far above them all as Sky High Hill outtops Sumac Knoll at its base, and ought to have—is entitled to—the office of constable (when he is of age) for life.

Enough for Plym, however, that he is an unliveried

member of the friendly brotherhood of Ourtown, that he is at least, a peer among peers, aye, a Narragansett Peer, for his ancestors were peers of that stalwart race that held sway under the leadeship of the "Great King," Miantonomo, slain by the savage Uncas, and preserved its tribal relations far into the second half of the nineteenth century—more than two hundred years after the death of Miantonomo.

Aseneth "spoke her mind" when Mr. Boye proposed to burden her with riches. "Lor', I wouldn't sleep er wink, er take er minute's comfort with all thet money ter think on! I'd 'spect ter be robbed ev'ry night! I uster git purty skeery er thinkin' o' thet mortgage er hangin' over's, er runnin' up in'trest so, an' er ye wanter give's 'nough ter pay up thet, ye kin, and' I'll be 'bleeged ter ye; but I kinder think all ther time it's er tradin' in ther marcies o' ther Lord ter git pay fer dewin' oeur duty. All I want is er clear conshins, a good home an' plenty ter dew—plenty o' butter an' cheese ter make—an' what butter we're gettin' from ther keows—ther new Holsterins ye bought fer Arch'lus! Why, I dew b'lieve Arch'lus don't dew much neow a days but stan' roun' an' look at them keows; he's jest carri'd erway an' can't dew nothin' but pet'm. I missed my best harr brush an' foun' et in ther stable; he's ben er brushin' them keows with et. But ther money, Mr. Boye, don't ye give us tew much; we shan't know what ter dew with et!"

Sis' Ann whispered, "While ye're gittin', git!" but Aseneth could not be moved. While she received more than enough to pay the mortgage and something for a "rainy day," she refused the amount originally proposed.

Later in the year, Aleck Carley returned to the farm. He persuaded Hitty and her sister, a widow, to make

their home with him. The old farm began to assume the appearance it had formerly and to produce the good things of earth. Every Sunday, Aleck may be seen driving to church in his carryall with Hitty and her sister. He is a changed man and his neighbors and friends accept him as a citizen as much above par as any of them.

In the following year, Tallyho shook the dust of Ourtown from his feet. A good berth in a publishing house, the usual retreat of some clergymen, with excellent opportunity to exercise his vocal organs and air his opinions, was too strong a magnet. His farewell sermon made known the fact that the increase of salary was not an inducement to cause him to wrench himself away from the good people of Ourtown; his plea was that in the new position, greater good to his fellow men would accrue from his efforts in their behalf. But he departed for his own personal betterment, and, possibly for that of the town.

He was succeeded by a little man who wore light clothing, went fishing with Plym, and preached seven days in the week—one in the pulpit and six, by example, manly independence and timely words, wherever he happened to be. Plym is called the "assistant pastor;" he finds such delight in driving the gray colts that the new minister found pastoral work easy; assistant or not, Plym is his self-appointed coachman.

In the city, in a quiet street, is a house or block for three families, in the centre is Tristam Boye; on one side lives Bruce and Hope and on the other, Paige and Mary. Connecting doors make the house like one, and no week passes without bringing all the occupants together around the same table. And on such occasions, Archelaus and Aseneth may be present, or Captain

Bonny and Mr. Geld, the giant and the pigmy, may appear to make merry at the board.

Concluding details may show the sharp cunning of the plotter in chief. Let us return a moment to the thick of the battle—the next day after Agnes Canton left the Lullywick house. Agnes wrote to her friends, the Bartleys in Melton. An answer came quickly full of tokens of satisfaction and of pleasure that the lost child, as dear to them as their own, perhaps, if they had been blessed with any, had been found at last. In the correspondence that followed, the fact was revealed that the Bartleys had written often to Agnes in the early days of the separation; and these letters must have been received by somebody who held them; otherwise, they would have been returned through the dead letter office.

So much of interest to Hope and her father was revealed in the letters from the Bartleys, that in the fall, after the triple wedding, Hope and her father traveled to Melton to hear in detail the history of Hope, or Agnes Canton, as they knew her, for it was evident that the Bartleys could talk better than they could write; that was not the only object of the visit, however; Hope wished to see again face to face those who had favored her with so much kindness and made a part of her life happy and enjoyable; and her father wished to make some return for what had been done for his child.

Mrs. Bartley gave in minute detail the facts in relation to Agnes' or Hope's coming to Melton. A plainly dressed woman, middle aged, came to the hotel in Melton one day with a little girl called Agnes, and represented that the child was the daughter of her brother, lately deceased. The child was ill on arrival and continued ill several weeks, at least, was kept in bed, as the landlord's wife knew. No physician was called, the

woman, Miss Canton, announcing that the child's illness was merely one of the common ills of childhood and that her experience was sufficient to combat it. The inference is that the child was drugged, or had been given anaesthetics, and if not ill was restrained that she might not communicate with any one. At last the child, Agnes, recovered and began to walk around the village, always in the company of the woman who claimed to be her aunt. Whether the child had been ill or not she had suffered in some way, for when she first appeared, she was weak, pale and emaciated.

One day the woman Canton and Agnes strolled in the direction of the farm of the Bartleys, Mrs. Bartley, among her flowers in the garden by the roadside, noting the apparent weariness of the little girl, invited the woman accompanying her to come to the porch and rest. Acquaintance was made and grew; the woman and the child came nearly every day to sit in the porch and to wander among the flowers. To Agnes, the farm was a welcome retreat, evidently, for she began to throw off the result of her illness or whatever had come to her, to become more animated and to take some interest in life.

Within five days after the first meeting, Miss Canton and her neice Agnes became Mrs. Bartley's boarders, the woman saying that she preferred the quiet of the farm house to the publicity of the hotel. One fact remembered by Mrs. Bartley is significant. The girl Agnes exclaimed often, "My name's Hope!" The woman explained this by saying that her father called her "his hope." About two weeks after coming to the Bartleys, the woman went away to be gone a few days. She never returned; probably, she had accomplished what she had been hired to do—find a secluded home for the girl—

and then had no more interest in her. Weeks later a letter came from a woman claiming to be the sister of the Miss Canton; the sister had died suddenly, according to the writer. The Bartleys were asked to keep Agnes till a home could be found for her. And there she remained till the "sister" (the woman Lullywick) appeared and took Agnes to her home in the city. That is the story—the story that reveals the brutality—was it insane brutality and cunning of Isabella Boye-Tukins-Lullywick.

In the winter following Tristam Boye's marriage, a letter came from Jacob Carruther's wife to one of the trustees mentioned in the will made by Mr. Boye before he departed from Oldport. On his death bed, Carruthers confessed that he gave the will into the custody of Isabella Tukins and, for a consideration, settled the estate in her interest. As the letter did not refer to Tristam Boye or to his daughter, it may be inferred that he accepted what he considered as proof of the death of both the father and the daughter. If he had been hired to ignore the daughter's claim without proof of death, the fact doubtless would have come forth in the confession; a man with force of character or honor enough to make a confession on his death bed, does not stop at a half way station, but goes on to the end.

From all of which comes the conclusion, agreeable to all who love justice and the sure tripping of wrong-doing, that if Bruce, Paige and Wainworth had not loitered in the Carley Woods—if Plym had not encountered Aleck Carley and played at "Swing low," the end, after all was approaching, and would surely come to all participators in the tragedy of justice.

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